

THAMES  
AND  
TWEED

GEORGE ROOPER

REVISED EDITION

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# THAMES AND TWEED

BY

GEORGE ROOPER

AUTHOR OF "FLOOD, FIELD, AND FOREST,"  
"TALES AND SKETCHES," ETC.

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*THIRD EDITION, REVISED AND ENLARGED*

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ADVERTISEMENTS.

"A Book for the Naturalist and Sportsman."

New Edition, Price 5s.,

FLOOD, FIELD, AND FOREST.

BY GEORGE ROOPER.

CONTENTS.

- I. AUTOBIOGRAPHY OF SALMO SALAR, Esq.
- II. A FOX'S TALE.
- III. BOLSOVER FOREST.
- IV. THE BAGMAN.

OPINIONS OF THE PRESS.

"A small volume is here recommended, not only to the sportsman, but to the general reader, which, while it deals with all field sports—even with the rat and the badger—and deals with them all lovingly as things of beauty and joys for ever, while it delights by the freshness of its story-telling, and ascends to high pathos in its incidents, is replete with a knowledge which nothing short of a life study can have given."—*Fortnightly Review*.

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OPINIONS OF THE PRESS OF PREVIOUS EDITIONS OF  
"THAMES AND TWEED."

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"We can sincerely recommend 'Thames and Tweed' to anglers who are desirous of getting many wise hints and suggestions of a practical kind. It deserves the success of a second edition."—*Observer*.

"Under the title of 'Thames and Tweed' Mr. Rooper has given us another of his interesting, amusing, and highly useful books on sporting subjects. . . . The book is essentially an angler's book, full of useful hints given in the pleasantest and most popular style. . . . As a contribution to angling literature, we look upon it as among the best, and certainly one of the pleasantest we have ever read."—*Sporting Gazette*.

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"Unpretending as the little book is, it contains admirable directions for the principal methods of angling, and will no doubt be of the greatest service to those who aspire to excel in the art which has been aptly termed 'the contemplative man's recreation.'"—*Northampton Gazette*.

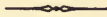


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## PREFACE.

TO

### THE THIRD EDITION.



IT is quite ten years since the first edition of this little book was published. It was well received, and bade fair to become popular, but, unluckily for me, a *great* book on the same subject appeared at the same time, under the auspices of "Longman & Co.," profusely illustrated, and beautifully got up. Perhaps it was the better book; at any rate its publication stopped the sale of my second edition, which "dragged its slow length along," and when, at last, it had run out, I had not the heart to venture upon a third. Whether I am justified in doing so now time will show, probably not, but I venture to think that there are hints in the practical portion of the book worth the attention at least of the young fisherman, and which possibly older ones may find of value. The main object of the book, however, is to instil into the young fisherman's mind some knowledge of the natural history

of the fish he essays to capture, and this, in a simple and concise form, I have endeavoured to impart.

With reference to the salmon, I have gone far more into detail; the chapter on it is entirely new, and I venture to recommend the *facts* contained in it to the attention of those who, anxious to learn the habits of the fish, can only do so through the pages of authors, who, as a rule, have simply copied from each other, or drawn on their imagination for the information afforded.

I have especially referred to the volume on the salmon in the Badminton Library because it is now—and probably for long will be—the text book of salmon fishers, and because, though the hints and instructions to young fishers are admirable, the natural history of the fish is, I do not hesitate to say, replete with errors. There is hardly a point insisted on that I do not discredit or dispute. For instance, I deny that a smolt ever remained in the fresh water for three years, or went down to the sea in March or April. I discredit the tale of the parr, *in a state of nature*, impregnating the salmon's eggs, and for the suggestion that a big trout, on occasion, performs that office, "incredulus odi," it is contrary to the ordinations of Nature; were it otherwise our streams

and rivers would be populated by a hybrid race of unfertile nondescripts. I differ, from personal observation, as to the mode in which the "redd" is formed (by the way, a fish is not said to be "on the reds" in respect of the prevalent colour of the male). I utterly deny that any salmon ever jumped "ten or twelve feet" perpendicular, or swam at the rate of "1500 feet a minute." I consider that the pace a fish *travels* is about one mile an hour. The use attributed to the "beak" of the male fish seems to me absurd. As a weapon of offence it would be of no account; neither, as suggested, can it be utilised for digging; it is too soft for either purpose. The male fish is not called an "old soldier" *after* he has spawned, for he has then lost the red colour from which he took the name, nor is he then called a "kipper." "After spawning," the author tells us, "the male fish are called kippers, the females baggitts." This is not so, as every one conversant with the subject knows; after spawning *all* salmon, male or female, are *kelts*, and known by no other name; their condition, as articles of food too, is most unfairly described as "quite unfit for food, *almost poisonous.*"

Immediately after spawning no doubt the fish is lean and lank and worthless as food, but,

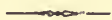
after a short time, the great majority at least are handsome, well-shaped fish, paler in colour no doubt, and deficient in flavour, but just exactly as *wholesome* as a fresh-run fish. They are eaten, and always were eaten, and always will be eaten every spring in thousands, very many in London.

But I have indicated quite sufficient points of difference between those contained in the volume of the Badminton Library and in this unpretending little work. Many more will be found if referred to. If I appear too dogmatic I can only say that the facts I advance are the result of careful observation for a period of thirty or forty years, during which, as a lessee of waters on many of the principal rivers in Scotland and Ireland, I have neglected no opportunity of acquiring information as to the true habits of a fish respecting which we are still far too much in the dark.

*May 1, 1894.*

G. R.

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# THAMES AND TWEED.

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## INTRODUCTORY.

IT is my belief that, when dominion was given to man over the beasts of the field, the birds of the air, and the fishes of the sea, certain tribes or families of the two former were more especially destined for his use and sustenance, and were endued with the instinct of domestication, which rendered them subservient to his will, reliant on him for their support and maintenance, and submissive in at least some measure to his requirements for animal food. Of some beasts, then as now, both the wild and the tame type existed; of others the wild only, or the tame only. So with birds: there were tame birds and wild birds, and some which, being neither tame nor wild, were capable of sufficient domestication to keep them within the reach of man, although they might not,

like Mrs. Partington's ducks, "come and be killed." I think that no one who, putting aside prejudice and long-received opinion, gives the matter his serious consideration, can doubt this.\*

As to fish, the case was altogether different; it necessarily was at the Flood. There was no bond of union or sympathy between them and man, no natural dependence; and his dominion over them was strictly limited to his power of exercising it; the fear of him and the dread of him were innate in the fish, but neither love nor craving for protection, nor voluntary submission to his will.

From very early, if not from the earliest times, men seem to have enjoyed the pursuit and capture of fish. We find angling in our oldest written records, as in the perhaps still more ancient ones of the Egyptians. Job, in the earliest of our books is asked, "Canst thou draw out Leviathan with a hook?" Cleopatra, we are told, cajoled Mark

\* Abel was a keeper of sheep—of domesticated sheep—such sheep as the Eastern shepherd has, ever since the actions of man were recorded, led forth to the green pastures; not of the Aoudad, the wild type of the race, the active, unsubdued creature, still found in numbers on Ararat and other mountains of the East. Job possessed cattle and asses, but surely neither the bison nor the buffalo, the quagga nor the zebra; untamed and untamable they then were—untamed and untamable they continue to the present day.

Antony, by making her slaves dive and affix live fish to his hook, as they sat and enjoyed the sport of angling together. Angling, indeed, was an amusement in which her very remote Egyptian predecessors appear to have delighted, and natives of high rank are depicted on papyrus rolls as catching fish with a hook and line. Oppian, a Greek writer who flourished about A.D. 170, wrote a poem in five books upon fish and fishing; and Homer, who lived a thousand years before him, more than once distinctly refers to the art of angling; the monster Scylla is represented as catching dolphins.

But I need not insist further; angling must be admitted to be one of the most ancient, and I claim for it the credit of being the most scientific, the most absorbing, and the most satisfying amusement that can be followed in the way of sport. Neither is the fascination it exercises over its votaries of an evanescent character. Men "lose their nerve" and give up hunting; they lack strength for walking; their eyesight fails and they give up shooting; rowing, after a certain time of life, becomes irksome; cricket and football are out of the question; but who ever gave up fishing? or has heard of anyone giving up fishing, so long as he could handle a rod, or hobble along the bank, or even sit in a boat? There was, a few years since,

a well-known character at St. Boswell's, a man of humble birth, totally blind, who, attended by his dog, groped his way daily to the Tweed, and there angled not unsuccessfully, for trout, with a fly. He was a poor man, and had neither help nor guide beyond what casual sympathy might bestow; yet except once, when he caught his dog, who, after some exciting play, broke his tackle, and left him groaning over the supposed loss of a huge salmon, I never heard of his coming to grief.

Yes! fishing is a noble art, an absorbing occupation, and one to which a man of high intellect may without shame or scruple give himself. Its pursuit leads the angler into the most beautiful scenery at the loveliest time of the year, and the pleasantest hours of the day; it is not so absorbing as to preclude the contemplation of the beauties of nature or to exclude reflection; it is a sufficiently active employment for health and exercise, without necessitating the more boisterous efforts of the chase or the harder labour of shooting. It is a pursuit the pleasure of which increases with its practice—it “grows by what it feeds on”—increasing rather than diminishing with age, while the skill and knowledge gained by long experience more than compensate for the absence of youthful strength and vigour. Were I a fish, I should pray

to be defended from the attack of an "old fisherman."

With respect to the practical part of the art, of which I propose to treat in the following pages, I am well aware that there are scores of fishermen with greater experience, and greater skill than I can boast of who *might* write upon the subject; but they *do not*. I do not write for such, except that they, as critics, may correct any error of mine, and, exposing it in a friendly spirit, add the result of their own experience or observation. I have jotted down such precepts and such information as appeared to me, after a long and extensive practice of the art of angling, to be best worth noting: and, craving the indulgence of the more experienced, I venture to commend the following pages to the perusal of the younger and less experienced followers of the pleasantest and most scientific pursuit which can be classed under the head of sporting.

## PRELIMINARY.

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FISHERMEN are generally methodical, and it is in deference to the requisitions of *method* that I "begin at the beginning," and offer a very few preliminary hints on the subjects of dress, rods, tackle, &c. There is nothing particularly new or important or interesting in what I offer; but, as the result of considerable experience and observation, it may be found useful to some of my readers. The practised fisherman will, of course, skip the chapter, and the unpractised one will do so or not as he thinks proper. I have advisedly made my observations as brief as possible. I need hardly say that they might have been spun out to any conceivable extent, and that without any especial strain on either my inventive powers or my memory.

*Dress.*—The fisherman's dress is by no means an unimportant matter. Bright colours or white must be avoided. Let your person be arrayed

“*integumentis nigris vel obfuscis,*” as the Oxford statutes run. Wear a flannel shirt and a low-crowned hat, not a white one, two pairs of socks at least *under* your wading stockings, and one pair *over*. Your shoes should be made of good, sound, country leather, the soles as thick as is compatible with comfortable walking, and studded with an abundance of the roughest, ugliest nails you can get—(wading shoes are not intended to walk on Turkey carpets with); grease them thoroughly *while wet*, which will prevent them becoming hard or cracking; but take care that the grease does not touch the stockings themselves. The more flannel you have about you the better; and your waterproof garments, however impervious to water, should by no means be *air-tight*: it is as bad, nay worse, to be wet from within as from without.

*Rods.*—Of the manufacture of rods I shall say nothing. I recommend the young fisherman to go to a first-rate shop, and pay a fair price; and I will venture to say that, if the desired result be not obtained, the fault will not be in the tool, but in the workman. For bottom-fishing, trolling, and spinning, no rods in the world excel those made in London. As to fly-fishing rods, opinions differ. The English-made rods are generally stiff, the Irish are generally the reverse; but Irish makers

have the advantage, inasmuch as they *can* make a stiff rod, but English makers frequently fail in their pliable ones. English rods, from the difference in wages and rent, are necessarily more expensive than Irish. Rods vary in price, from five shillings for bottom fishing, to ten pounds for salmon fishing. Great difference of opinion exists as to the respective merits of the stiff and the limber salmon rod. I prefer the latter, but, as usual, there is much to be said on both sides. The stiffer the rod the easier it is to throw with, and the less the chance of whipping off the fly. A stiff rod, too, picks the fly more readily off the water, and, deftly handled, will throw a heavy line in the teeth of a nor'-wester, "bite he never so rudely." But then it seldom happens that the fisherman is compelled to cast in the teeth of the wind. Streams—trout and salmon streams especially—turn and wind, and bend and double, and present all manner of faces to the wind. If one pool will not fish, another will; if one stream run counter, the next will flow fair: a side wind, as in sailing, can always be made serviceable; indeed it is greatly preferable, to my thinking, for casting, whatever it may be for sailing, to one directly astern. The "gentle art" is not to be pursued by rough, defiant methods, but by humouring, as it were, and taking advantage of



the chances and changes which natural causes, bent to the desired purposes, present. Although the proper handling of the springy rod, such as is ordinarily used in Ireland, is far, very far, more difficult to attain to, the result is well worth all the trouble, and all the expense in loss of flies, of arriving at. Of course, if you wish, having hooked a fish, to haul him out, as it were, "by the hair of the head," the object is much better attained by means of a stiff rod than a pliable one; and when fish are rising freely and taking the fly greedily, a larger number may be taken within a given time than can be brought to basket with a limber one; but it is very rarely that fish are in this accommodating humour, and a larger proportion of those hooked are killed with a pliant rod. Even were it otherwise, the balance, in my mind, would still be greatly in its favour. The sport shown by the fish is infinitely greater in the one case than in the other. The angler's object is not simply to kill a quantity of fish; were it so, the net would effect the object more readily; and, on the whole, having regard to the conscious pride of skill, and the pleasure in exercising it, as well as to the result, I recommend young fishermen to adopt the use of a limber, springy rod, in preference to a stiff one. He will find that, having once overcome the little

propensity the rod at first evinces for sending it "to grass," the fly drops upon the water in a far more satisfactory manner. It floats out, as it were, and, hovering for a moment when at its utmost stretch, alights like thistledown upon the surface of the water, instead of hitting it with the force of a pebble or the preliminary hailstone of a summer storm. If, in the excitement of the moment, you strike somewhat too strongly, the hook is not torn from its hold; if the fish jump, the rod yields to the strain; if chance or carelessness slacken the hold, the pressure is merely abated, not removed. Even in unpractised hands a fish finds far less chance of escape, for the limber rod yields to each struggle, and for the fish to obtain a dead pull is impossible. There is something, too, so graceful in the mere use, as well as in the detailed play, of a pliant rod: no exertion, hardly any strength, is required; the rod itself appears, as though instinct with life, to have shot forth the "imponderable" fly into boundless space. This, I need hardly say, is not the work of the top joint, or of any other joint: the rod plays and works "homogeneously," to use a long word, from the butt to the tip. I am rather in favour of a spliced rod, as more generally used in Ireland, the trouble of putting it up and taking down is purely imaginary,

and simply betrays want of experience in those who advance it as an objection. I can tie my splice at any time in less than three minutes, and whether I remain on the river a day, a week, a month, or a season, it would never occur to me to untie it until I go away.

*Reels.*—Of the means and appliances necessary for fishing, there are none of greater importance than the reel, and none in which, happily, greater perfection in the manufacture has been attained. Excepting multipliers, which are things of a bygone age, no *bad* reels are now made. Of course they bear the names of their vendors, but, like guns and gun-locks, they are, I take it, generally made at Birmingham, and the difference in quality is fairly represented by the difference in price, which ranges from two shillings to two pounds. The larger the cylinder the better, and where intended to carry an unusual length of line, the increase in size should be rather in the direction of depth than breadth. The handle, if of the ordinary formation, should stand clear of the side, and the edges should be bevelled off, so that in the event of its being caught the line may not be cut upon it. By far the best principle was invented by a friend of mine, some fifty years since, but, unfortunately, not patented. It is now universally

adopted—the peculiarity being that the handle, consisting of a bone or ivory cone, is fastened to the circular plate which turns the cylinder, so that, should the line catch, it slips readily off. I have in my possession the first reel that ever was made upon this principle, and, though rather *wheezy*, it is still a very useful implement. One or two cogged wheels are essential to the true working, and these create that glorious “whirr” which strikes so gladly on the fisherman’s nerves when his fish is running out line. Irish reels are frequently attached to the rod by means of a spike, terminating in a screw that passes through the butt, a button being screwed on to the opposite side; but the ordinary English mode of sliding rings is, I think, preferable. Whichever mode is adopted, the reel should be fixed with its handle towards the fisherman’s *left* hand. When a fish is struck, the rod must be at once turned upwards, the line and the weight of the fish in consequence resting upon the rod itself, instead of upon the rings: the handle will then, of course, be in its proper place on the fisherman’s *right* hand. Rings, by the way, are rarely of sufficient size or in sufficient number. A dozen may with advantage be attached to a salmon-rod, and the smallest should be of sufficient size to allow of the line

running through them with perfect ease. Upright rings are preferable.

*Hooks.*—The principal manufactories of hooks are at Redditch, Kendal, Carlisle, Kirby, and Limerick. I question whether there is any difference in quality, though of course fishermen will have their predilections on the subject. Hooks are made in sizes numbered from 1 to 12, the English ones commencing with No. 1, the Limerick with No. 12, as the smallest. The “sneck-bend” is the most approved form for angling purposes. In this the barbed point is not exactly in the same plane with the shank, and, in consequence, more likely to strike into the fish’s mouth. A longer shank is required for fly-tying than for angling purposes, and it is of even greater importance to secure a really good and well-tempered hook.

*Flies.*—Of flies, so called, the shape, size, and colour are diversified beyond measure, limited, in fact, only by the fancy of their maker. Local flies are no doubt the most taking, but they have the serious disadvantage of being frequently tied on inferior gut and bad hooks. It seems hardly fair, but it certainly answers to use them as *patterns*, to be worked up by more reliable hands. These flies may not be so taking to *your* eye, but *you* are not a salmon; the “rule of thumb” is generally found

infallible, and the experience of generations of fishermen has proved what particular fly is most captivating in each particular water. I think that harmony in colours has more to do with success than any other quality; and in looking at the gorgeous and costly flies got up in London shops, it must not be forgotten that if the fly swim truly and well—and unless it does so the fish will not rise at it—only the breast or lower portion is presented to the fish's ken. I have seen in books of Natural History, the authors of which think it necessary to assign a patent cause for every natural effect, that the gorgeous plumage of the kingfisher is given to him for the purpose of attracting the fish towards him. Yet this gorgeous plumage is all on the bird's back, and that presented to his innocent victims is of the most unpretending and unobtrusive character. Seen through the watery medium, all colours are blended into one, more or less partaking of the predominant one, red, yellow, or blue. Such will be the colours, when exposed to the air, of numerous marine insects and molluscs on which the salmon feeds in the tide-ways, and for which, if played in the jerking mode peculiar to marine insects, he probably mistakes the fly. It is a beautiful and most useful art that of tying flies, and one in which, at an early period of

my life, I acquired some slight skill; but the limits of my leisure did not admit of my attaining to any proficiency in it; and again, at the risk of being considered a lukewarm follower of the craft, I counsel my readers to repair to the best shops, especially those—if such there be—in the immediate vicinity of the river they mean to fish, in preference to exercising their own skill in producing them.

In salmon-fishing one fly only is used. In a well-known work “two or three” are recommended, but the suggestion seems to argue some want of experience. THREE flies are never used in salmon-fishing, for obvious reasons. Even with two, the danger is great. Whether in lake or river, there must be banks, rocks, logs, or weeds upon which a hooked salmon may hitch the disengaged fly: and should you—which is quite possible—hook a second fish while playing the first, you might as well hope to hold two bulls tied together by the tails as two salmon so coupled. You would sing with Mac-heath—

“How happy could I be with either!”

But, rely upon it, both one and “t’other dear charmer” would soon be “away.”

*Lines.*—The best lines are made of silk and hair, in what proportions I am ignorant. They are sold

in all shops, from a penny or less to threepence a yard, according to the conscience of the vendor. "Prepared" lines, as they are called—that is, lines coated with a preparation of wax and oil—are excellent for trolling and spinning purposes, but are not very commonly used for fly-fishing. About eighty yards I consider sufficient for a salmon-line—perhaps a hundred may be better, as allowing for waste; and, of course, one may meet with fish endowed with extraordinary running powers, or the fisherman may be in positions where a very long line is essential; but in my personal experience I have very rarely had eighty yards of line entirely run off my reel, though, upon two occasions—one on the Makerstoun water on Tweed, and one at Ballyshannon on the Erne—only a few feet out of that quantity were left on my reel. The line, whatever its length, should be thickest in the middle, and gradually taper towards each end.

*Casting-Lines.*—The casting-line should taper from its base, commencing with two or three plaits, and terminating in at least three feet of good, round, sound, single gut. Machines may be bought for the manufacture of casting-lines, as for cartridges, meerschaum pipes, or anything else, with full instructions gratis; but you will



buy far better than you can make—at least I can—and cheaper too. The gut should be stained before it is made up—blue, or green, or coffee-colour, anything but black or white. Unstained gut would doubtless be the best if it would retain its transparency; but it will not. When soaked it becomes opaque and white—a colour of all others the most visible in the water.

*Fly-Books.*—Fly-books, like shooting-coats, are generally made too small. They should be as large as can conveniently be carried in your pocket. Besides flies, your book should contain a skein of fine silk, some strands of gut, a piece of prepared wax, a pair of scissors, half a dozen spare casting lines, and some Nottingham twist (with which to splice a broken top). Two or three leaves of some soft, spongy substance—I hardly know what, but *not* flannel—should be inserted, wherein to stick used flies to dry. Flannel is too tough, and is apt to retain an inconvenient hold on the hook, should the barb penetrate it. Bottom-fishers' books must, in addition, be furnished with plummet, split-shot, spare lines, disgorgers, floats, and quill caps. I take for granted that no *fisherman* ever goes out without a good knife, a piece of string, a cork-screw, and a button-hook in his pocket.

*Landing-Net.*—The landing-net should be light and deep, and manufactured of fine, hard, strong twine. When carried by an attendant, the handle can hardly be too long, in reason; but when carried by the fisherman, two feet may be quite long enough. It should be stuck by means of a flat piece of metal into a belt; the handiest are furnished with a hinge, which enables the net to hang doubled up out of the fisherman's way, and is fixed without difficulty in its proper position by a spring-catch.

For salmon, the net cannot, in reason or out, be too long, or too large, or too deep, or too strong, so long as your attendant can readily use it. The hoop should be iron, three feet across, the net five feet deep, and of the strongest material, the handle eight or nine feet in length. After the capture of each fish the net should be thoroughly washed; there is a sort of slime, especially on the autumn fish, which, if not removed, rots the net very rapidly, and a salmon will go through a rotten net like harlequin through a paper hoop.

*Gaff.*—The gaff should be made of well-tempered steel, not too large or too small, about the size of a very small butcher's hook. There should be a slight elbow or curve in the back, which gives a

better hold on the fish. A barbed gaff is an abomination; it is the most efficient implement used by the poacher, especially in the Welsh rivers; moreover, it spoils the fish: no true sportsman would think of using one. The gaff handle should not be too heavy, and in some degree elastic; the great secret in using it is to pass it *under* the fish,\* not to be in a hurry, to make sure of your stroke, and, having made it, never to relax your hold.

*Bag and Basket.*—Waterproof bags have come into fashion of late years. They are most useful articles, but should supplement, and not supersede, the basket. They are essentially nasty things as receptacles for fish; the fish soon spoil, and they impart a vengeful smell, which water will not wash away. They have, or ought to have, three smaller pockets inside, in which to deposit your pipe and tobacco, cigar-case, flask, knife, notebook, and

\* I am aware that this mode of using the gaff is not that generally adopted, but, from long experience, I consider it the best, and for the following reasons: (1) In drawing the gaff upwards you can hardly miss your fish, which, from the refraction of the water, is no uncommon occurrence when used in the ordinary way; (2) The point is far more certain to penetrate the soft belly of the fish than the hard scales on the back; (3) When struck, the force of the blow turns the fish right over, putting him at once *hors de combat*.

other trifles, the bag itself accommodating your lunch, your sketch-book, a copy of "Thames and Tweed," "Flood, Field, and Forest,"\* or some other readable book, wherewith to while away any non-fishing hours of the day.

The fisherman's basket requires no special description—do not have it too large. It is astonishing how many pounds of trout will pack in a small basket; and salmon are always worth carrying by hand.

Trout-flies are, to some extent, local; but there are certain "standard" flies with which, in two sizes, every angler's fishing-book should be furnished. These are the blue dun, the quill gnat, the hare's ear, the March brown, the Marlow buzz (Welsh coch-y-bondhu), the black gnat, and the palmers, black, brown, and red.

\* This little book has been the subject of, I think, unmerited persecution on the part of the booksellers. Messrs. W. H. Smith and Son, for reasons only known to themselves, absolutely refused to admit it on their bookstalls. Booksellers, when applied to for it, with one accord asserted that it was "out of print," and one, to my knowledge, "*with great difficulty*" obtained for a customer, a friend of mine, a dirty copy, for which he charged 5s. The publishers of the fifth edition—Virtue and Co. Limited—would have been glad to supply any number of copies at less than half that price. I attribute this unfair proceeding mainly to the low price of the book, and the resulting small profit on it; it is much easier to say "out of print" than to inquire about a book to be sold at 2s. or 2s. 6d.

Flies are assumed to represent not only the insects so called, but also beetles and caterpillars. The latter are known as palmers. Beetles, of which the "Welsh button" is one of the most killing, are generally used on hot days. The winged flies are best on a windy day, when they may be assumed to have been blown into the water.

Flies tied without wings are called "buzz," and are supposed to represent the drowned insect. Duns are the immature, spinners the perfect insect.

*Throwing the Fly.*—Reading and writing, Dogberry says, come by nature, and in the main Dogberry was right. No written or oral instruction can make a horseman, a sportsman, or a fisherman. Each one, like "Poeta," "*nascitur, non fit.*" Still, some general rules may be laid down for the guidance of the tyro. The grand rule to be observed is—*to make your rod do the work.* To "keep a dog and bark yourself" is proverbially foolish; and, having acquired an implement so beautifully adapted for its purpose as a well-made rod, it is absurd not to make full use of it.

Strength—I mean muscular power—is not necessary. I do not say that a strong man, "*cæteris paribus,*" will not throw a better line than

a weak one; but strength is not "the one thing needful." He whose

"Rod was made of a sturdy oak,  
His line a cable that ne'er broke,  
Whose hook was baited with a dragon's tail,  
Who sat on a rock and bobbed for a whale,"

could not have thrown ten yards of line if his life depended on it.

As I have said, let your rod do the work. Begin with a short line without a hook, practise on the land till you have got the line, to some extent, under command, and when you commence real fishing do not attempt too much. Far more fish will be caught by a short line well thrown, than a long one badly thrown; indeed, it will be a miracle if the latter ever succeed. Theoretically, your line must stretch backwards as far as it is intended to be cast forward, and ample time must be afforded for the fly to reach the furthest point before you return it, or it will be whipped off.

Practice, however, will greatly modify the first part of this rule, and enable you to get your line out where rocks or trees are close behind your back. Let the beginner avoid all difficulties of the sort, and simply essay to throw the line clear and well away from him. This he will do by a plain up-

and-down stroke, the spring of the upper portion of the rod being brought into play. The knack once acquired, any degree of excellence may be obtained by practice, and, so far as I know, by no other means. Teaching is of no avail, and I therefore abstain from attempting it.

## PART I.

# Thames.

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### THE GUDGEON

I BEGIN with the gudgeon. Why? Because, as a much-respected and very wealthy friend of mine, formerly a tradesman, remarked, in explanation of his refusal to visit a captain on half pay, who, covered with scars and glory, supported his rank, his wife, and four children on £300 a year—"One must draw the line somewhere." I draw mine at gudgeon, otherwise I would fain give the little urchins who sometimes fish for minnows and fry in the Serpentine with crooked pins some hints for their guidance. Whatever is worth doing at all is worth doing well, and the pin might be bent more artistically, more scientifically; the broken match which does duty for a float might—but I



abstain. One dogma only will I enunciate, and that more for the benefit of the owners of aquaria than that of the little arabs. If you wish to transport your minnows, especially in hot weather, from one place to another, fill the bottle *half* full of water, insert the fish, and *cork it tightly* down. Of course, this is all against philosophy, analogy, and so forth, but it is the true method. I have proved it. Now for the gudgeon.

Gudgeon-fishing may be considered as the very accidence of the grammar of fishing, and, unless with the minnows I have referred to, I could hardly commence lower in the scale than with the phase of Thames angling known as "gudgeon-fishing." Reader! do not curl your lip in scorn! Thames angler! dread not a sneer! We have heard your craft contemned, we have known it mentioned with deprecatory and faint praise, as though it required an excuse. In our estimation nothing of the sort holds place; we are fishermen—pure and simple. As a learned judge said to his brother judge at a bar-dinner—"No, brother; not *bad* port wine: there is no *bad* port wine; some port is better than other—but there is *no bad* port wine." So say we of fishing: some fishing is better than other, but there is *no bad* fishing; and we would rather angle for a stickleback in a ditch,

or a newt in a tank, than not angle at all. There are degrees, too, in gudgeon-fishing. Every man, no doubt, can catch gudgeons; but one will catch a hundred while another catches a score—one will catch a score while another catches a dozen.

But before we approach the subject of catching him let us consider what he is. The gudgeon is one of the *Cyprinidæ*—a branch of the great carp family, which, with a few exceptions, populate the Thames. His scientific name is *Gobio*—a word originally applied to any fish of small value—*Gobio fluviatilis*—and he enjoys, in common with most other fishes—therein contrasting favourably with birds—the advantage of having only one name, English or Latin. The appearance of the gudgeon is too well known to require description, but it may be remarked that, like his cousin the barbel, he is gifted with two small “barbules” pendent from the angle on each side of his mouth. The exact purpose of these appendages it is difficult to assign, but no doubt they act in some way as feelers, like the whiskers of a cat, and assist the fish, which is essentially a bottom-feeder, in detecting its prey in the gravel, among which it loves to “route.”

In fishing for the gudgeon, a lengthy rod is unnecessary; it is naturally a bold fish, greedy, and, like most others which feed in shoals, ever anxious

to snatch the worm from its neighbour's mouth, and almost proverbially easy of capture. The gudgeon is not, in fact, more stupid than other fish; but, swimming in immense shoals, and distributed over the greater portion of the rivers it inhabits, there are always young and inexperienced fish ready to snap at the bait offered to them. There is no doubt, however, that gudgeons, like all other fish, have learned wisdom from experience, and the numbers formerly taken—thirty in an hour was no unusual quantity—are now unheard of.

To fish for gudgeon, the depth of water should be first accurately plumbed, and the bait—a small red worm—allowed almost to trail upon the ground, being carried down by the force of the stream acting on a sufficiently-leaded quill float. The line, as in every description of angling, should be kept well out of the water—not so tight as to impede the swimming of the float, but never so loose as to allow an appreciable interval of time between the strike and its effect. In rapid streams the strike can hardly be too quickly made, but in slower ones, the float may be allowed almost to disappear beneath the surface; and it must be ever borne in mind that the strike, to be effective, must be made *while the fish is running from you*. If the float has begun to rise, the slight turn of the wrist which

effects the strike is made in vain. A rather oblique direction with reference to the assumed position of the fish I have generally found the best.

It is customary for the puntsman to use a long, heavy iron rake, with which he disturbs the bed of the stream, thereby exposing the myriad of insects and partially-developed forms of insect life on which the gudgeon feed, and towards which they, with small perch, ruffs, young barbel, and other fish, eagerly rush. For myself, upon the principle of "*nec Deus intersit*," &c., I prefer trying a few swims before I rake. It is easy to see the shoals of fish where they exist, and, the bottom being level and clear of weeds, to make your pitch accordingly. When the appetite of what may be called your invited guests is to some extent satiated, it is time enough to use the rake, to call distant friends and strangers to the feast.

This fish is in season from June to September, after which they retire to the deep holes, and are rarely, if ever, taken—remaining probably in a semi-torpid state throughout the winter. It spawns early in the season—the end of March or beginning of April.

The gudgeon, properly dressed—fried in oil, or abundance of lard, we consider the best mode—is a dish worthy of an epicure, and a few hours may

occasionally be spent in capturing him with both pleasure and profit.

### THE ROACH.

THE roach is a far-away cousin of the gudgeon, another of the great family of *Cyprinidæ*, which ought to be canonised as affording, at their proper cost, the greatest amount of sport to the greatest number of anglers. Laugh and jeer as ye may, ye fishers for trout and salmon! we maintain that there is more delicacy of touch, more pride of art, more artistic skill in roach-fishing than in any other sort of angling whatever. The roach is not naturally a shy fish; he is, as beseems his somewhat aldermanic figure, and the amplitude of his white waistcoat, a free liver, and ready to take at any time almost any bait that may be offered to him. In lakes, and ponds, and unfished waters the roach may be taken in any number by the rudest devices; but in the Thames, where generations of fishermen have continually exercised their craft at the expense of successive shoals of roach, he has become shy and wary to a degree; and, though we read of twelve dozen and upwards killed in a day, we well know that the numbers, like the

“fifty thousand additional lamps” in the long-extinct Vauxhall Gardens, are rarely counted, or rather counted with rare liberality; at all events, they consist principally of the youthful fry, all inexperienced in the wicked devices of the angler. “*Non cuivis contingit*”—it is not everyone who can fill the well of his punt with really good roach, each from half a pound to a pound and a half in weight, in a day’s angling. The fisherman who can do this in ordinary circumstances may be sneered at by the mighty salmon-fisher, but give him the same opportunity, and rely upon it he will make good use of it.

The roach affects deep running, but not rapid water; he feeds near, but not on, the bottom; and, after plumbing, the bait should be regulated so as to travel two or three inches from the bottom. The roach may be fished for either from a punt or from the shore, and to the bank-fisher there is no inhabitant of the Thames that affords such constant and unintermittent sport. The rod for this purpose is made of bamboo, eighteen or twenty feet in length, the last joint of the butt end being readily removable to facilitate the landing of the hooked fish. When a reel is used it may be carried in the pocket, a roach rod not being furnished with rings, but a reel is

generally dispensed with, the length of the rod admitting of sufficient line wherewith to play a fish so averse to locomotion as is the roach.

The bank-fisher is generally a character in his way, and enthusiastic in the art; he carries with him a large flag-basket, containing, besides his pipe and his luncheon, all the implements of his craft; he has, too, a camp-stool and a forked stick on which his long rod rests. Patient and contemplative, like his prototype the heron, he sits through the long day watching his well-balanced float, and not unfrequently carries home to his sympathetic and admiring family a considerable weight of fish.

"Pleasant is the fisher's life  
By the waters streaming."

But our business is not with him.

The roach is the king of fishes to the genuine punt fisher. And here we may describe the operation of "fixing the punt," which is by no means so simple or easy as it may appear to the uninitiated. It should be stated that roach-fishing differs from gudgeon-fishing in this, that while in the latter a constant change of place is desirable—the fish going off their feed after some twenty minutes or half an hour, and always taking best in new and unaccustomed places—the former seem to affect the same localities continuously.

The longer you fish and the more ground-bait you throw in, as a rule, the more roach you will take. With gudgeon the converse will be found to be the case. Having arrived at your swim, a known resort of the roach, taking one "ripeck" in hand, and leaning forwards up-stream as far as you can reach, bringing the iron-shod end almost under the boat, you proceed by a wriggling motion of the arms, requiring some considerable strength and more skill, to fix it in the hard bottom, at an angle of something like forty-five *against* the stream; then using the fixed pole as a lever, you swing or pass the boat gradually round, walking with the other ripeck to the opposite end, your companion in the meantime tying the rope to that already fixed, and then finishing the operation by tying your own. There is some art even in the simple operation of fastening the ropes. If tied too closely the punt will lift the poles, if not closely enough, its working, from the action of the stream, will loosen the hold on the bottom. The string should be cross-gartered, Malvolio-fashion, and fastened some two feet above the gunwale with a simple half-hitch.

Your punt being properly pitched, the next operation is to manufacture ground-bait, the materials for which—clay, bran, soaked bread, and



a few scalded greaves—it is assumed, have been previously provided. These materials are kneaded into round balls somewhat bigger than one's fist, the object being to amalgamate as much bread, and more essentially bran, as the clay will carry to the bottom. Boys delight in the essentially nasty operation of manufacturing ground-bait, and casting the balls into the swim. The action of the water disintegrates the ball, and the floating particles pass down the stream, offering a lure to the fish, which they follow up from great distances. The ground-bait should be thrown in at intervals—now and again a lump—not continuously, or it is possible that the fish may make their dinner off what is intended merely as a whet to the appetite.

The rod required for roach-fishing from a punt is not nearly so long as that used from the shore, the bottom joint of which, as has been said, is generally taken off before the fish is landed; but as compared with that used for gudgeons it should be lengthy—say twelve feet. It must be tolerably stiff, too, to ensure rapid striking, which is absolutely essential in roach-fishing. The line should be fine, the reel true, and the bottom of the very finest gut, or, what is generally preferred by the accomplished angler, of single hair; the float of cork or quill, long, and large, heavily shotted with

numerous fine shot, until it swim with not more than half an inch above the surface; the shot should be about a foot from the hook, a single one being affixed three inches above it to keep it in its proper place. The object of the powerful, well-balanced float with a quantity of shot is to ensure the rapid sinking of the bait, so as to get the full advantage of the swim, and at the same time to indicate the slightest possible bite. The line after each swim should be brought back *quite* close to the gunwale of the boat, and the bait occasionally examined to see that it has not become dead and sodden.

The strike must be instantaneous, or you will never catch your fish; and it is well, whether you observe a bite or not, invariably to strike at the end of your swim, as the fish may be, and frequently is, at that moment testing the quality of your bait, which he is certain to eject, with that marvellous and unexplained power which all fish possess, some twelve inches from him, the moment he becomes aware that there is something unwholesome in the just-coveted dainty. The line as well as the rod must be much longer than for the gudgeon, the roach being the shyer fish, and not inclined to feed so near the boat; but it is far more necessary to keep your line "in hand," as it were,—not tight, but well out of the water, and ready for a short, sharp

strike at any moment. The *whish* made by the line through the water is a token of bad striking, as is the pulling of the line completely out.

If the fish be missed, the bait should travel on as if nothing particular had happened; the clumsy fish that has missed his mark is well entitled to another turn, or perhaps some greedy companion may snatch the envied morsel from him.

Roach spawn towards the end of May, later than the gudgeon. They are in season from July to January, perhaps later, but it is cold work fishing for them in November, which is the best month. Up to October the gentle is the most taking bait: two or three should be put on the hook together, and frequently changed, for when dead and flabby they cease to be attractive. In default of gentles, which are not always obtainable, bread-paste kneaded up with wool to make it tenacious, is perhaps the best bait. A piece about as big as a pea should be stuck on to the hook by a single movement; it does not do to manipulate it after it is once fixed.

For winter-fishing a small red worm is the most enticing lure, and when the Thames is flooded great quantities are taken with this bait by the fishermen, who then, poor fellows! are exercising their craft on their own account.

The worst of roach-fishing is, that the roach himself, when taken, is utterly useless, except as bait for the pike (of which hereafter). We have tried him in all ways—fried, boiled, broiled, water-souced—each successive mode worse than the last. We never tasted it, but we conceive that, like Cæsar and Pompey, paper pulp flavoured with mud and roach must be very much alike—especially roach; but, like “P. P.’s” phlebotomy, he may do for “the poor.”\*

The general weight of the roach taken in the Thames is from two ounces to a pound; but we have heard of them as large as three pounds. The biggest I ever took was a little over a pound and a half. The roach is on the whole a game fish, and capable of considerable resistance to any proposal for transporting him from his native element. The extraordinary fineness of the tackle used renders this, in the case of a large fish, a work of some difficulty; and we do not hesitate to say that a really good roach-angler is capable of any other species of fishing, and, if opportunity offered, would excel in it.

The generic (scientific) name of the roach is *Cyprinus rutilus*. It spawns, as stated, early in

\* “But to bleed adventured I not, *except the poor.*”—SWIFT, “Adventures of P. P., Clerk of this Parish.”

the summer, and, like most of the family, is very prolific. The fins are red (hence *rutilus*); and this colour furnishes the readiest means of distinguishing it from its cousin the dace, hereafter to be described, whose fins are white, or nearly so.

We have mentioned "gentles" as the usual and best bait for roach. These may be bought at any tackle-shop, or from any fisherman; but it may be well to remark, that gentles are not all alike. There are gentles and gentles. Not *ex quovis cadavere* are the maggots on which the roach delighteth to feed taken. "The sun," "kissing carrion," may breed "maggots in a dead dog," but the roach turns up his nose at them. Gentles are born in bullock's liver, and when nearly full-grown cradled in bran, which scours and sweetens them. Sam, an intelligent young man who acts as my fisherman, tells me they taste "sweetish:"—I have never tried them.

### THE DACE.

The dace (*Cyprinus leuciscus*) is not only a near relation, but a companion and associate, of the roach. Their habits and food are the same, and it is very rarely that a good roach-swim does not afford dace, and *vice versâ*. We think, but we are not sure, that the dace affects a somewhat

higher level in the water than the roach: the gudgeon feeds on the bottom, the roach a little above, and the dace somewhat higher than the roach. The same bait and the same tackle are used for both; but the dace is the more greedy or the less shy fish of the two, bites more freely, and is taken with larger hooks and coarser lines than the roach will look at.

The dace does not run nearly so large as the roach: a fish of a quarter of a pound may be considered a good specimen. It is more lively on the hook, and, in proportion to its size, shows greater sport, trusting more to the powers of its fins and tail than the roach does; the latter being apt to take an unfair advantage of its clumsy figure, and, turning broadside to the opposing stream, cheat the guileless angler with the show of dimensions which it by no means possesses.

The form of the dace is rather elegant than otherwise. Its fins, which are white instead of red, the colour of the roach's, at once distinguish it from that fish; and its scales, which are small and closely packed, are exceeded in brilliancy by no river-fish (hence the appellation *leuciscus*) except the bleak, and are used in making imitation pearls and other very beautiful ornaments.

As an article of food—for man we mean—the

dace is beneath contempt; but as a bait for a better fish, hereafter to be described, to wit, the jack, it is unequalled. The greedy tyrant of the waters is in some respects an epicure, and besides that the appearance of the dace in the water is very attractive, the fish itself seems to have an especial charm for its devourer. The form, too, of the dace is admirably adapted for fixing on to the flight of hooks used for spinning. A slight "wobble" is all very well in pike-fishing, but a roach is *all* wobble.

We have separated the dace from the roach, and placed him nearly at the end of his class, because with him commences the practice of the great art of fly-fishing. The gudgeon supplies the accident of bottom fishing, the dace of fly-fishing. In the spring and summer months the dace is altogether a surface feeder; and with reasonably fine tackle, a midge, a blue dun, or a red ant, great execution may be done on the gravelly shallows without much strain on the skill of the fisherman. In the autumn he affects the same diet as his cousin the roach.

## THE BARBEL.

Like a small minority of the intelligent youth of the present day, this fish is principally distinguished by its beard, from which it derives its

name, and which consists of a pair of wattles pendant from either jaw. The precise mode in which these appendages are utilised by the fish in seeking out or providing food is not clear, but that in some manner they assist in the search, if not in the capture, there can be no question.

The barbel is the very *hog* of fishes; it feeds at the bottom, "routling" like a pig with its long snout among the stones, rotten weeds, and *débris* at the bottom of the stream. It is omnivorous, feeding largely on water-weed as well as worms, insects, fish, and garbage. That it feeds on the first we assert from the unanimous testimony of Thames fishermen; on the fourth, from the fact of our having frequently taken the fish while spinning for jack; and that it feeds on the last we assume from the fact of greaves being an excellent bait for it. Worms, however, are the ordinary bait used, and you often take barbel while fishing for roach with gentles.

Although voracious when on the feed, and by no means particular either as to the nature or quality of its food, no other fish which we are acquainted with is so capricious as the barbel. When they are in a taking mood, the well of the punt may be filled with them in a few hours; but one may fish for days or weeks without feeling a



“tug.” The capture also depends, in some inscrutable manner, on the locality. There are barbel holes swarming with fish, which may be seen at all times chasing one another about, turning on their broad backs, and performing all sorts of clumsy antics in the cool depths they rejoice in, but which are never known to take a bait. They are like the Laird of Macfarlane’s geese, which are recorded to have “liked their play better than their meat.” There is a barbel-hole near the mill-tail by Caversham Lock of this unproductive nature. We will venture to say there is a ton-weight of fish within a very moderate space, but after long and fruitless endeavours, the attempt to catch them has been given up as hopeless by all the fishermen in that neighbourhood.

The mode of fishing is peculiar. The barbel-pitch must be baited for several days or nights previously with quarts of great dew-worms embedded in clay. The fish collect in great numbers to feed upon the dainty morsels, and, having grown bold from impunity, fall—occasionally, at least—victims to the angler, who offers them just the same thing, with the slight addition of a barbed hook attached to a slender line within each. A hundredweight and upwards may thus be captured in a morning; but the line is often used in vain, the

fish is not in the mood for taking, and three times out of four the worms expended, or assumed to be expended, by the fisherman, are thrown away.

The orthodox mode of angling for barbel is with a reel and line, both of considerable length, and the latter of moderate thickness, ending with eight or ten feet of gut, the last eighteen inches passed through a bullet, which is kept from slipping down by a No. 4 shot, playing the bait (the most taking is a large well-scoured lob-worm) just clear of, but almost on the bottom. Ten or twelve yards of line are let off the reel, coiled at the bottom of the punt, and, aided by the weight of the bullet, are thrown out down the stream to the full extent of the length. The bait having reached the bottom, any slack there may be is at once taken up, and the line being moderately taut and passed under or round the fisher's finger so as to give immediate notice of a bite, the point of the rod but a few inches above the water, he waits with what patience he may for the desired result. This, as we have said, is sometimes long a-coming, sometimes it never comes, but when it does the fact is signified by a smartish jerk on the line. To this first summons you, like an overworked waiter in a second-class inn, pay no attention; but should your customer persevere, and ring the bell a second

time, which he will do somewhat impatiently, you may strike, but not too hard; hard striking is always objectionable, and the barbel represents a heavy mass of matter, which is very apt to operate as a break upon tackle when force is too roughly applied. When struck, your fish is absolutely safe, barring breakage; for your hook would be as likely to lose its hold on a piece of indiarubber as on this essentially leather-mouthed fish, and it is just a matter of discretion or taste what time you may spend in landing him. His piggishness is never more manifest than when he is hooked; he neither jumps out of the water, nor runs out the line, but spreading his broad fins, putting his head well down, and opposing his great body to the weight of the water, he pulls in an obstinate, swinish way, never yielding an inch, but succumbing at last to main force—an ignoble prize, for the barbel is coarse to look upon, and worthless to eat.

Another and a better mode of barbel-fishing is one more generally practised on the Trent than on the Thames. A longer, lighter rod than that used as already described is fitted with a "pirn," a kind of wooden reel, which runs round on the slightest possible pressure, without check of any kind, and which requires some little skill and experience to manage properly. This is furnished with some

eighty or a hundred yards of "Nottingham line," a float eight or ten inches long, of trifling bulk, and a light lead of just sufficient weight to keep the bait at the bottom without stopping the float, which is then allowed to travel down the stream, dragging the bait with it, to any distance within the reach of the line which the nature of the bottom will allow. This is by far the most scientific, the most sportsmanlike, and the most killing mode of angling for the barbel, and I commend it to the attention of my readers.

In the days of my youth, barbel were more confiding or more greedy than at the present time. Ignorant and unskilled as I was, and provided with the most ordinary tackle, I never failed to kill five or six fish in Shepperton Deeps, under the auspices of Purday (I think his Christian name was John), the grandfather no doubt of the Purdays who still practise the craft in the same locality. Although I formerly spent the autumn months on the banks of the Thames, and frequently fished for barbel, I have had but one really successful day. The Court journalist was pleased to notify my success to the world; and if the record of that excellent paper be true—and I have no reason to doubt it, though I did not myself weigh the fish—I killed twenty-five fish weighing eighty-four pounds,

and but for the intrusion of a stranger, who coolly stationed himself at the tail of my swim, and whose fisherman caught a good many fish which belonged to me, I should, no doubt, have killed many more.

The barbel is known as the largest of the family of *Cyprinidæ* (*Cyprinus barbuis*), sometimes attaining the weight of twelve or fourteen pounds. It spawns early in the summer. As an article of food it is utterly worthless, at least to man. Pike appreciate it when young, and its shape, like that of the dace, peculiarly adapts it for a spinning bait. I recommend its being used as such whenever taken. I cannot doubt but that this fish operates beneficially in the humble capacity of scavenger in the localities he affects. His large size, voracious and indiscriminate appetite, and habit of feeding at the bottom, justify the assumption.

### THE CHUB.

The last of the *Cyprinidæ* to which I shall refer (for though both the tench and the carp may be found in the Thames, they are of comparatively rare occurrence, and not commonly objects of the angler's pursuit) is the chub, a fish for which, albeit he, like the majority of his congeners,

is bad for food, and not good for sport, I have a latent affection. Although not properly a surface-feeding fish, like the trout or grayling, the chub seems really to go out of his way to afford the best sport in his power to the young fly-fisher who may have graduated with the dace on the shallows ; and although a hungry, not to say greedy fish, to take him with the artificial fly is by no means an easy matter.

The skill required to hook one large chub would suffice for a dozen trout or salmon. Of course, the youth and hobblederoys are green, inexperienced, and easily captured ; but to kill an old chub from two to five pounds weight with the fly—(I have never met with one above the latter weight)—is a credit even to the experienced fisherman. It is only during the late spring and summer months, or the early autumn, that the chub will take what is by courtesy called a " fly " on the Thames. This is generally an imitation of a humble bee or a great hairy caterpillar. At such times of the year, the chub occupies a station close under the bank, beneath an overhanging willow, and immediately behind a substantial mass of weeds, into which, as a place of refuge, he is prepared to retire upon the smallest provocation. There is not a shy or more easily startled fish ; it

is therefore essential to throw a very long line, and to throw it deftly *over* the weeds and *under* the bough and *short* of the bank. To do this properly is not the work of the tyro, and the fisherman who brings home a good basket of fine chub is capable of far greater things in the art of angling. However long the line thrown, the approach of the fish towards its destined prey is plainly visible in the clear and comparatively shallow water it frequents, and it requires no inconsiderable amount of self-restraint to avoid the fly-fisher's besetting sin—striking too quickly. Strike, however, you must, and that sharply, so as to fix the barb into the by no means unaccommodating palate or lip of the fish. Unless this is done, the chub is nearly certain to escape, for lying, as it generally does, close to the bank, it could not run from you if it wished, which it does not, for its refuge and hope of safety are in the beds of weeds between it and you. The most dangerous manœuvre a fish can adopt is therefore of necessity put in practice; it rushes towards, not away from you, and a slack line is inevitably the result. Of course, the opposition tactics are to throw the point of the rod well back, and wind up your line as rapidly as possible; once get "a pull" upon him and the result is certain, and far too easy for sport; the fish, however large,

comes heavily, stolidly, to your hand, and the landing-net secures him. What to do with him is the next question, and one which I confess I am unable to answer. I generally give him to a semi-civilised bargee, or an ambitious bank-fisher, who takes him home, and, I fear, gets the unmerited credit with his wife and family of having himself captured the "delicate monster."

A poaching but very killing way of taking this fish is to fasten a cockchafer, a humble bee, a hairy caterpillar, or, better than any, a large grasshopper to a naked hook, and creeping under cover of the willows to the brink of the stream, yourself entirely concealed, pass the rod with a short line twisted round it, through the leafy screen, and unwinding the line, drop the bait on to the surface of the water as though it had been accidentally detached from the tree. This being exactly what the fish was looking for, he chuckles at his own prescience, and swallows the coveted insect with an audible smack of his lips, and a considerable appreciation of his own knowledge of the ways of the world. With a short line and a secure hold there is no possibility of your losing your prey, except by breakage of tackle, and that is an accident of rare occurrence, thanks to the general excellence of London makers.



In the autumn the chub takes the worm readily, but, except in the mode first described, it is not in my opinion a fish at all worth fishing for.

The chub is known in the north as the "skelly," perhaps on account of the large size of its scales. Its scientific name is *Cyprinus cephalus*. The epithet (Greek for a head) refers to its head being rather disproportionately large, particularly about the jaws—(we talk of a chubby-cheeked boy or a chubby-headed fellow). Like most of the tribe, the chub spawns during the spring months, about May; the fins are a dusky red or brown colour.

### THE PERCH.

The Thames, as has been said, is occupied almost exclusively by fish of the order *Cyprinidæ*, just as Argyleshire is by Campbells and Wales by Jones; but a few other tribes are represented by isolated families. Such is the case with the *Percidæ*, a type of which *Perca fluviatilis* is one of the commonest and most appreciated, for food, if not for sport, of the denizens of the river.

This fish is too well known to require description; a clumsily shaped, awkward fish, but handsomely marked, and, when in good condition, by no means

unpleasant to look upon, though essentially so to handle, the strong sharp spines on the dorsal fin inflicting a painful and not easily-cured wound. The hungry pike, although when no more accommodating food is at hand he will swallow the smaller ones, shrinks instinctively from any interference with adult members of the family; and this immunity from the attacks of other fish tends greatly to the increase in the numbers of the perch. Some of the Cumberland and Westmoreland lakes are stocked with them to the absolute exclusion of any others, and so quarrelsome and greedy are they, that the only wonder is that they have not, like the Kilkenny cats, annihilated themselves.

It frequently happens while fishing for gudgeon, that those confiding little fish suddenly, and without apparent cause, leave off biting. If you shorten your line a few inches, remove the red worm, and replace it by a minnow, the hook carefully passed through the upper lip, you will probably catch the responsible cause in the shape of an intrusive perch; and though he affords little sport, for a more faint-hearted fish does not exist, there are few if any in the Thames that can compare with him for eating. The smaller perch should be water-souched, or, if for breakfast, fried. The larger ones, say from half a pound upwards, are never better than when boiled,

and, with the addition of a little plain sauce of melted butter and anchovy, afford a dish for an epicure.

The ordinary mode of fishing for perch is with a light rod, a long line, and a large float. Fine fishing is thrown away, for the perch is a greedy fish, rushes incontinently at the bait, and if given time enough is pretty certain to hook himself, though, as in the case of other fish, it is necessary to strike by way of clinching the bargain.

He is, as has been intimated, fond of gudgeon, although the feeling is not reciprocated; but his "favourite vanity" is the minnow, and great havoc the perch must make among that long-suffering race. I have taken six or eight out of the stomach of a perch of half a pound weight. The mode of baiting is very simple. Pass the hook (No. 7) through the upper lip, a good-sized shot having been previously attached to the line a few inches above; regulate the float—a large one—to a depth varying from four to six feet, and if in a stream, allow the line to run out, as in barbel-fishing, as far as you please. If there be no current, throw it cleverly, so as not to disengage the bait, to a considerable distance from your punt. The perch is a free biter, and no great amount of the assumed one thing needful to a fisherman—patience—is

requisite. If you do not get a run soon, shift the place of the bait ; that failing, shift yourself, and seek another pitch. In summer the perch, in common with pike and most other fish, affects the weed, and you cannot do better than fish in the immediate neighbourhood of a heavy mass impinging upon deep water. In autumn and winter they seek deep holes, and great numbers, sometimes twenty or thirty, may be taken from one such place. You must, however, be careful not to let many escape, for, once pricked, the perch becomes very restless, and is apt to lead or drive the shoal away.

This is not a treatise on natural history, or I might comment upon a singular fact which has forced itself on my observation. I have hardly, if ever, opened a fish that did not prove to be a female, and, at whatever time of the year, always with spawn *well developed*, yet the spawning time of perch is in April or May. The late Mr. Russell, then editor of the "Scotsman," informed me that he had made a similar observation, with the difference that his fish were all *males*. No doubt the different sexes go in shoals.

The weight of perch varies from a few ounces to three or four pounds. I once saw three killed of the latter weight, or very near it, in one day ;

but, although larger-sized ones are occasionally recorded, I have never seen one.

### THE EEL.

We may assume that no one *angles* for eels ; still, as the eel is an inhabitant of the Thames, and is moreover a *fish*, we will not ignore its existence ; for culinary purposes it perhaps enjoys greater consideration than many of the more sought-for denizens of that stream. Eels are of three kinds : the snig—which, coated with sand, occupies the costermonger's shallow basket, and is so accustomed to be skinned alive as to have acquired a proverbial indifference to the process—the flat-nosed eel, and the round-nosed eel. Their ordinary food consists of worms, fish alive or dead, and animal matter of all kinds, whatever its state and condition.

A most effective mode of taking them is to inclose in a large-meshed net some carrion enveloped in straw or hay, and attach it by a rope to the bank. A considerable number will be captured by pulling the mass suddenly to land after it has lain a week in the water. Another mode, more in the retail line, is to thread a quantity of worms on worsted, tie them together in a lump, and dropping the slimy ball from a stiff rod into the deep water,

pull it suddenly up; after sufficient time has been given for the eel to gorge two or three, he will find himself landed before he can make up his mind to part with the mouthful.

The most legitimate mode of fishing for eels is, however, by night-lines or bank-runners; and we would suggest that for this purpose a single hook is better than a double, a worm a better bait than a fish, and four or five loosely-twisted strands of strong hemp or lightly-twisted line better than the strongest gimp. The power the eel possesses of breaking anything of the latter description is simply marvellous, and a single line he will assuredly bite through; but the loose strands get between his teeth. The line must be sufficiently long, but care must be taken that it will not reach to a rock, a post, or even a large bank of weeds, or the eel will avail himself of the purchase, and break your line though he die for it.

A most exciting sport is eel-spearing, though the spear is plunged blindly into the deep mud. We practised this art long years ago in the fen ditches in Huntingdonshire, and with considerable success. Terrible hard work that eel-spearing is, and the man who can stick to it for a couple of hours may aspire to six shillings a day as a navvy! In the lakes of Westmeath the process is more scientific,

at least requires more skill. On a sunny day the boat floats over the shallows of the lake, and the great eels are detected through the bright, clear water, half in, half out of their holes, sitting on the threshold of their houses as it were, enjoying the fine weather. Spearing them under such circumstances is very like spearing a trout or salmon as practised in the olden time, a sport in which we have joined, though we suppose we ought to be ashamed to own it.

A vast number of eels run down to sea in the autumn for the purpose of depositing their spawn, and are then in their best condition.\* When, if ever, they return, does not appear quite clear, perhaps they never do return; but the fry, the "eel-fair," as it is called, proceed up the rivers in May, meeting the smolts who are then descending. That eminent naturalist, the late Mr. Buckland, once wrote in an article in "Land and Water" that the smolts devour the young eels; but I do not think they are open to the imputation, neither has any testimony been produced in support of it. The smolts in salmon rivers go down in myriads, the eel-fry ascend in

\* The exodus appears to be preconcerted, and occurs at a fixed time in October, always after a flood, and on a moonlight night. I have seen six *ton* taken in one night.

equal or greater numbers. Nothing stops them, no obstacle stays their course, they wriggle over the damp stones, they cross the dewy meadows, they climb the perpendicular sluice-gates, they ascend every ditch and streamlet, they occupy every water, running or stagnant, and afford food not only to man, but to numberless birds, beasts, and fishes.

I know that it has been doubted, but I take it as a recognised fact, that under no circumstances do eels ever breed in fresh water. A given number of eels turned into a pond having no outlet whatever, may, and probably will, decrease in number; they will never increase. It is well known that they occasionally quit the water at night, and wander over the dewy grass in search of food or suitable dwelling-places; and the instinct by which they find their way to the water is as marvellous and inexplicable as are many of the operations of instinct when judged by the light of reason. In Ireland and Scotland eels abound, but are held in a sort of superstitious horror by the natives. A Highlander would as soon eat a snake as an eel, and can hardly be persuaded to touch one for the purpose of extracting the hook. The Irish Celt *spits* at the mention of its name, as he does when he talks of a toad or a lizard, or other object of St. Patrick's anathema. There are, however, eel-fisheries in



some Irish rivers—Ballyshannon for instance, and on the Shannon—which are highly productive, and rented at £1000 and £1500 a year. I have often wondered that one has not been set up in Tweed, which swarms with the brightest, whitest, and largest eels I have ever seen. They are, moreover, terrible enemies to the *Salmonidæ*, devouring alike spawn, parr, and smolts.

The reader will please to bear in mind that the eel *is* a fish, and has scales and fins, as a fish ought to have. It is classed by Yarrell as *Anguilla* with the distinction *acuti-* or *lati-rostris* according to the shape of its nose. According to this author they are capable of a considerable amount of domestication, at any rate of taming. They will come to call, ea out of your hand, and distinguish their feeder. Eels, however, can hardly be considered as eligible pets, and would, I think, be quite incapable of anything like disinterested friendship.

The eel is a great sleeper, and spends all the winter in its muddy bed, from whence it is sometimes rudely extracted by the eel-spear above mentioned.

### THE PIKE.

In these days of broad-cloth and “financing,” it seems strange that this truculent, greedy tyrant

of the fresh waters should have been selected (perhaps, however, merely in "canting heraldry") for the cognisance, and adopted under its various synonyms as a surname, for many old families of good repute. The "Peakes" still flourish in Derbyshire; the Geddes, once a warlike race, are still numerous in the Lothians; the Broughams bear the "three white lucas," and they, we know, were "an ancient coat" in the days of Shakespeare. In the old time, however, might made right, and the rough of mood and ready of hand ruled the vassals of the land.

"Little reck'd they of a tame liege lord."

And the attributes of the pike—courage, strength, and swiftness—were arrogated to themselves by the noble and the chivalrous.

No fish is more common, or more hardy, than the pike. He inhabits alike stagnant pools, ponds, lakes, and streams comparatively rapid, like the Avon or the Trent. The *still* waters, however, are essentially his habitat; and though frequently found at the tail of a rapid, he affects the quieter parts of running streams, and thrives best in great lakes, where food is plentiful and readily procurable. Except that he eschews vegetable matter, and prefers fish to any other kind of food, the pike is simply omnivorous. Fish, flesh, fowl, are alike to him;

the young of his own species, the dace, the gudgeon, the roach, a young duck, a moor-hen, a gaping frog, a water rat—all are seized with equal avidity when he is in the humour to feed ; and, to do him justice, it is very rarely that he is *not* in the humour. A gentleman, who has no wish to communicate his name to the Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals, once threw thirty young sparrows and starlings, one after another, to a large pike in a lake, and he seized and swallowed the last with the same avidity as the first.

No one wished Mr Buckland success, in his praiseworthy attempt to make the Thames a salmon river, more fervently than myself ; but so long as pike exist there in the numbers they do—and they will continue to exist in those numbers so long as the Thames flows down to the sea—it was simply waste of that pearl of fishes to introduce it to the water for the mere purpose of being swallowed by *Esox lucius*, as it inevitably was within a week of its leaving the breeding-ponds. When salmon were found in the Thames (they were never abundant, for the Thames is not naturally a salmon river), pike, a fish of comparatively modern introduction, were unknown. Even should one smolt in ten thousand have found its way to the sea and returned a grilse, which, so far as I

know, has never, of later years at least, yet happened, there are pike in the Thames that would swallow him like a gudgeon. I have seen a jack, of three pound weight, which had taken a trimmer bait, seized by his grandfather, or some other elderly relative, and have had a great fight before, to our mutual disappointment, the elder was compelled to loose his hold. Once, in the Thames, I caught a barbel of nearly six pounds weight that had evidently been seized and severely bitten by a pike; and there are well-authenticated instances of great fish being taken from the water, choked in their effort to swallow a moor-hen or a full-grown duck. One instance of the latter in Norfolk, and another in Rutland, have come within my own knowledge.\*

There are several ways of fishing for the pike; and as it undoubtedly affords the very best and most exciting sport within their scope to those who do not throw a fly for trout, and have not the luxury of salmon-fishing, I shall describe those several ways; and though, individually, I may hold

\* Mr. F. Buckland once showed me a cast of two pike, about five pounds each in weight, the one choked in his attempt to swallow the other. There is no appreciable difference in their size, yet the one is half-way down the throat of the other. A similar instance is recorded in "Flood, Field, and Forest."

one kind in higher estimation than another, I am well aware that great skill, perseverance, and knowledge of the art are required in making a successful practitioner in any.

## TRIMMERING.

Trimmers and night-lines may, in the opinion of many of my readers, come within the category of poaching implements, and I confess they somewhat savour of irregular proclivities in a sportsman; still a fish is sometimes wanted for dinner; time is sometimes wanting for regular fishing; jack must sometimes be taken by proxy; and some young sportsmen are, happily or unhappily, ready to take the sport the fates provide them, and be thankful—

“Turning to mirth all things on earth,”

as only the young in heart can. In a great lake or a mere well stocked with pike, no better or more productive sport can be desired than that of trimmering. I have killed a hundredweight and upwards of jack in a day.

The best mode of setting night-lines is by what are called bank-runners. I do not mean a peg with a slit in it, and a coil of line at foot, though many good fish are so taken; but one made with a round piece of wood like a cotton reel in its upper

part, and a long strong spike to fasten it on to the bank, or, a safer mode, into the bed of the river, a foot below the surface. The reel is passed through a circular iron nail, round which it runs freely; twenty yards at least of good water-line must be attached, with a leaden bullet tied some two feet from the end, to which a single hook on six or eight inches of gimp, strong, but not over thick, is fastened by a slip knot. There are various modes of baiting, and various baits are used—gudgeon, dace, roach, or frogs. Agreeing probably with dace, roach, and frogs, I prefer the first, and, indeed, have placed them in order of precedence according to my own judgment. Some fishermen, with a baiting-needle, pass the gimp down the side of the bait under the scales, or under the skin of the frog, “handling him tenderly,” as old Izaak has it, so that the poor creatures may keep alive for many hours. This is, without doubt, a most killing method, but unnecessarily cruel, for a jack will take a dead bait, or at least one which he believes to be in a dying or helpless state, quite as freely as a live one.

To bait with a dead fish, it is merely necessary to pass the gimp by means of a baiting-needle right through it from the mouth to the fork of the tail: there is no need of tying. The bullet, which

lies at the bottom when the line has been thrown in a few yards from the shore, will give the play, the lighter bait floating above it in the most captivating manner, and, if not too heavy, offering no appreciable resistance to the removal of the supposed victim to the lair of the savage ogre, who conveys it thither to be devoured. I think that, unless very ravenous, a pike never bolts his fish at the moment of capture. He seizes him across the body, holds him hard and fast, retiring to his resting-place among the weeds to swallow him in private. Night-lines should always be laid in the neighbourhood of weeds.

Except dead or dying fish, however, the pike eschews dead animals as food. He may be taken by what is called a fly, which he no doubt mistakes for a young duck, or moor-hen, or a water-rat ; but in such case the strike must, as we shall hereafter explain, be instantaneous. No sooner is the sham bait taken into the mouth, than it is ejected with a force, common to all fish, but to me perfectly incomprehensible, and the nature of which I would gladly learn. I have known a dead bait, though firmly fastened, driven upwards from the hook at least eighteen inches along the line. The pike will, as I have said, swallow a dead fish, but I think under a misapprehension ; at any rate he will

take nothing else dead. When Scott's affrighted Sacristan listened to the ominous song of the water-kelpie,—

"A blue swollen corpse is a dainty meal,  
And I'll have my share with the pike and the eel,"—

he might have taken comfort from a knowledge of this fact; as Cuvier may have done when he told the devil, who threatened to eat him, that "it was gammon, his horns and hoofs showing him to be *graminivorous*." Marryat, too, libelled the fish in "Jacob Faithful." "I shouldn't wonder," said old Jacob, when he heard a splash in the water, "if that wasn't Bill." Sure enough it *was* Bill; and when recovered a week afterwards, he was so disfigured "by the pike and the eels, that he was 'no good to nobody.'" This, I say, is a libel on the pike; the ravenous brute will eat almost anything, but it must have at least a semblance of life.

To return to our trimmer. This engine is too well known to need description. I would merely suggest, that in extensive waters it is necessary to lay them well to windward, and advisable to stick a feather (black, as most visible) on the red or lower side, which, when taken by a fish, will become the upper, and afford a mark more readily caught by the eye than the peg.



The best mode of baiting is to pass a single hook (a good-sized salmon-hook is about the best) through the skin just under the back fin. The fish sustains little injury, and, if strong and healthy, may be released at the end of four or five hours, with freedom in lieu of "a good-service pension," and very little the worse (in our opinion—*his* might be less unbiassed) for the discipline he has undergone. Of course, having in the first instance taken the bounty, in the shape of a gentle, a fly, or a red worm, he ought to have been prepared for the chances of war.

The best bait for a trimmer in English lakes is the roach, as being, for his sins, the strongest and most tenacious of life; in Scotch, the parr—not the young salmon, but the barred-trout—*Salmo salmulus*—so classed, and properly classed, by Yarrell, the greatest of authorities on fish, and recognised as such by every observant sportsman whom I have ever met, though contradicted by inexperienced persons who talk or write of what they know not. A young salmon, however carefully put on the hook, dies in a very short time. Poor little one! soft and unused to hardships, it speedily succumbs, and is useless as a lure; but a parr, an adult gudgeon, or a roach, will tow a trimmer about for hours without material damage, and if its praiseworthy attempts to

catch a flat are unsuccessful, may, as suggested, be released by the grateful and humane fisherman, with the conviction that its span of life will be by no means shortened (it may have been made to seem long enough) by the ordeal it has undergone. It is great sport hunting a trimmer which has been taken by a big fish. A pair of strong oars will scarcely catch the bobbing, diving, disappearing cork; and, when caught, it requires delicate handling to hold and properly play the struggling fish. There is no aid from the yielding, elastic top-joint of a rod, but the exact strain that line and hook will sustain without breakage must be carefully calculated; and I have known a run to last pretty nearly as long, and, while it lasted, to afford nearly as much excitement, as a fox-chase. On the whole, trimmering, under proper restrictions, and in suitable waters, is by no means bad sport.

## TROLLING.

I have already quoted the learned judge's dictum, "Some port is better than other, but there is *no bad port*." Many modes of fishing are better than trolling, but trolling is not a bad mode; and, as it is a very killing mode, I shall venture to describe it.

The implements necessary for a troller are a baiting-needle, a piece of brown thread, a pair of scissors, and a dead-gorge hook. The latter, like almost everything else to be good, should be moderate in all its parts—of moderate weight, moderate length, the hooks moderately curved, first inwardly, and secondly, more slightly, in an outward direction; a swivel is not essential, but very advantageous. The rod, about twelve feet in length, must be stout and stiff; in fact, if not too heavy, the stouter and stiffer the better. The rings should be fixed, and can hardly be too large, the great object being, as will be shown hereafter, to allow the line to run out without check or hindrance.

Almost any fish of proper size will answer as a bait, but perhaps a large gudgeon is the best that can be used: it is tough, well shaped for the purpose, and its flavour much appreciated by the greedy jack. The mode of baiting is, after killing the fish, to draw the shank of the hook, by aid of the baiting-needle, clean through it, entering at the mouth, and bringing it out at the fork of the tail. A few twists of the thread below the gills and behind the tail fasten it securely. Your scissors are then brought into play; the fins are cut close off, and the tail neatly cropped, so as to afford no

catching point for the weeds in which you are to fish. It is true that a fish thus manipulated bears no greater resemblance to its original self than a swathed pappoose to a sprawling baby; but the pike is probably guided at least as much by smell as by sight, and it is intended to drop this delicate morsel immediately under his worship's nose. He looks upon the lure as a maimed and helpless victim, and at once takes advantage of its assumed condition.

Some Thames fishermen troll throughout the season, but the practice is more general in the early part, from July to October, before the weeds have rotted down sufficiently to render spinning practicable. Standing at the head of the punt, you throw your bait with an easy spring to a moderate distance, right or left, dropping it under the bank, beneath roots, or in any casual opening in the weeds which will admit of its passage. Long casts are not necessary, but an adept will toss the bait to an inch where he intends it to drop, and the leaded weight carries it at once to the bottom where the great sulky pike,

“Hush'd in grim repose, expects its evening prey.”

It is possible that the indignation roused by the sudden intrusion of a despised small fish, evidently in bad circumstances, into his domestic

privacy, may have something to do with the result; for the pike is not very keen at this time of the year, and rarely leaves his lurking-place in search of food, taking, like the spider, whatever good luck may send him. Be that as it may, the temptation is irresistible, at least unresisted, and a slight curl in the water, a scarcely visible wave in the weeds, with an almost imperceptible check on the line, tell you that your bait is taken. Later in the year—say in October—when the pike comes out to feed, this is followed by a sharp run of a few feet or yards, as the case may be, towards his lair; to which, with the fish cross-ways in his mouth, as a dog carries a bone, he invariably returns before swallowing it. In the early part of the season, however, but a few inches of line are taken, sometimes none, and the fisherman is in pleasing doubt whether he has hold of a jack, a root, or a weed. Whichever it be, his tactics are of the simplest order—a masterly inaction. Letting out two or three yards of line, in case they should be wanted, you have nothing to do but look at your watch, note the time, and then smoke the pipe of expectation; read your “Thames and Tweed,” or a chapter of some book on field or forest, or, better still, a page in the great book of Nature, *passim*. Do you see that water-

rat?—*water-vole* is his proper designation—the sole representative of the ancient race of beavers in Great Britain. He is running along the water's edge, stopping at intervals to wash his whiskers and gaze fearlessly into your face. He is an interesting beast to watch, and, when fairly scanned, not so ugly as his long yellow teeth and angular visage might make you fancy; there is an air of benevolence, too, in the water-rat's face, when you examine it closely, which is expressive of his character, and quite unlike that of his distant cousin, *mus rattus*, the land rat. Guiltless, or all but guiltless, of animal food, the water-rat feeds almost exclusively on vegetable substances. He may nibble a dead fish if he find one, but has neither the will nor the power to injure a live one; therefore harm him not, but watch him as he moves towards you like a clock-work animal, his short legs hidden under his thick body, never diverging from his track, but swimming across the water as he meets it in exactly the same plane—so buoyant is his body—as that in which he runs. But you look at your watch, and at the movement your cool visitor turns up his inelegant little tail and dives down out of sight, reappearing at the mouth of one of his numerous holes on the distant bank. Five minutes have elapsed, and *now* you *strike* pretty sharply, and the wretched jack,

who has swallowed without compunction what he considered a helpless fish, his appointed prey, finds the barbed hook inextricably fixed in his vitals or in the lower part of his throat. Under such circumstances the pluckiest of fish could not be expected to show sport. The pike is never very plucky, and on a dead-gorge hook shows very little pluck indeed. On the whole, many, I think most, modes of fishing are preferable to trolling.

#### LIVE-BAIT FISHING.

Predaceous birds and beasts affect certain localities with surprising constancy. There are jungles in India, and, thank goodness! coverts in England, that *always* hold a tiger or a fox respectively, whatever the number of either that may have been killed out of them. Shoot a pair of falcons or of owls, if you can find it in your heart to do so, and in a very short time a fresh pair will assuredly take their places on the same cliff or in the same hollow tree.

The same rule holds good, if possible, more invariably, with respect to fish. Whether salmon, trout, or pike be the object of your pursuit, there are certain traditional holes or lairs that will never fail you. An old Scotch keeper, on taking affec-

tionate leave of me the night before I returned southward, said, solemnly, "A' may be *deed* before ye come back, but there's ae thing I'd warn ye—in yonder hole, where the swirl comes round the mickle stane, there's *aye a trout beastie, an' a grand ane!*" I never verified his words, but I am quite sure John McIntyre spoke the truth, and kill as many as you will from that particular spot, there shall never lack others to take their place. As with British soldiers in a breach—one man down, another steps gallantly into his place—so it is with trout and pike. I knew an especial run in Penton Hook, a noted place for live-bait fishing, out of which I have taken two, three, or four in a day, and out of which, within the space of a few yards, I verily believe that hundreds are taken in the course of every year

You may use your trolling-rod for live-bait fishing, with the reel and line thereunto appertaining; a large, fat float, as big as a dumpling, must be provided, through which some three feet of the line are to be drawn, and firmly fastened with a peg. The hook, which is of course tied on gimp, consists of a single eel-hook with a triple-hook floating free four inches below it. The single hook is passed either through the lip of the bait or under the back fin. As in trimmering, a small bullet counteracts the bait's propensity to swim on the surface of the water.



Standing at the head of the punt, which for the time is stationary, your boatman hanging on to the rushes, or the willow, or the bank, you drop your bait quietly a few feet in advance, or laterally according to the current, and work the line in such a manner that the float, though pulled in a different direction, shall drag the bait willy-nilly into all sorts of odd corners and casual openings in the weeds near which the pike may be supposed to lurk.

A large roach is your best bait, and, if there be a pike within a reasonable distance of your swim, he is almost certain to take. His presence is intimated by the violent agitation and partial immersion of the float caused by the poor roach's vain efforts to escape his enemy. Another moment, and your bait is seized, and the float disappears beneath the surface, travelling rapidly towards the pike's headquarters. Strike, but not too quickly nor too hard; your fish is almost certainly hooked, and, if of large size, will show capital sport.

I am aware that many fishermen look upon this mode of fishing as poaching; but though akin to it, I cannot admit it to be so, though it may be neither very artistic nor very exciting. Pike are such ravenous, gluttonous brutes, that all sentimentality is out of place with regard to them; and they are so prolific, and the larger ones so wary,

that no possible harm can accrue from any mode of rod-fishing however destructive. Besides, the hooks are not large, and are not bolted like a dead-gorge ; a fish has a fair chance of making a good fight for his life, and he generally makes it. Live-bait fishing should always be carried on in the immediate vicinity of weeds : in the open water, spinning will of course be practised, between which and trolling live-bait fishing may be considered as intermediate.

## SPINNING.

Spinning is certainly the most scientific, the most artistic, and, on the whole, the most killing mode of fishing for pike ; it may also be fairly called the most sportsmanlike. Trimmering depends little upon personal skill or experience ; live-bait fishing is but little above it ; and trolling—though I am loath to say anything in dispraise of it, seeing that it is an art thought worthy of culture by a large proportion of Thames fishermen—strikes me as rather akin to shooting pheasants running or hares sitting.

Spinning takes a high class in the noble school of fishers ; and the man who excels in it may fairly rank himself as the equal of any other professor of the art.

The best bait for spinning is a dace ; the fish is sufficiently tough, and admirably shaped for the purpose. The roach is too broad in proportion to its length to spin properly, and the scales of the gudgeon are not sufficiently bright to attract the notice of the pike. I think, too, that this fish has an especial affection for the dace. On one occasion, long ago, I was fishing in company with a gentleman who was certainly not my superior either in practical or theoretical knowledge of the art. He was provided with dace, I had only roach to fish with ; he caught five fish to my one, and when he kindly gave me a couple of dace, I killed two pike with them. No doubt a dace spins much more truly than a roach, but I do not consider that the result was much affected by this fact ; for a "wobble" in the bait is rather advantageous than otherwise ; but I believe that the pike, being well fed and dainty, felt and manifested a decided predilection for the one fish over the other.

I would not trespass on the ground taken by one of the best practical fishermen that ever wrote on the subject, Mr. Cholmondeley Pennell, or attempt to add anything to the instructions given in his admirable work on the pike, by laying down rules either for baiting the hook or using it when baited. My readers cannot do better than consult

his pages ; but I may say, that the S hook invented by himself is the simplest and best form of spinning-tackle that can be used. With it I captured the thirty-pound fish recorded below. In fixing the bait, the great point is the tail, which must form a slightly obtuse angle to the line of the body ; and the body should, by a careful adjustment of the lip-hook, be made as stiff and straight as possible ; this shape is more readily obtained by the use of Pennell's hook. You will require at least forty yards of line, plaited, not spun, and thoroughly prepared to prevent kinking ; your rod, of thirteen or fourteen feet, should be sufficiently pliable, not so much so as a fly-rod, but of far greater strength, and something between it and a trolling-rod. The bait is thrown out with a sort of jerk, requiring very little exertion, but when made by skilful hands astonishing the beholder by the distance to which the bait is thrown. Many Thames fishermen will, without apparent effort, shoot out twenty-five or thirty yards of line ; but distant throwing is not all that is required. To spin well, you must throw to exactly the spot you intend. A punctual man is not one who gets to his train ten minutes before it starts, neither is a good spinner one who throws ten yards beyond the mark ; he must know to a foot where he intends his bait to drop, and if he

mean to throw twenty-five yards of line, he must neither cast twenty-four nor twenty-six.

There are accomplished fishermen who, in anticipation of a kink or stoppage in the running of the line, will twist it round their little finger and thumb, and allow it to run off in the most artistic manner. This is the poetry of the art, and I commend its exercise to those who would excel in it, but I confess it is beyond my powers! and, as a rule, you will do well enough with a well-prepared line, if you coil it as you draw it in, foot by foot, at your feet.

Fish down-stream; keep your punt within a few yards of the weedy side, the head at an acute angle from it; make your cast across, and well in advance; work the bait towards you, so as to cover the whole stream, and finish by a few strokes from the top of the rod in the space between the head of the punt and the bank of rushes or weeds alongside. If a fish strike, return the blow as quickly as possible (*bis dat, &c.*) I know this is controverted, but, so far as my experience goes, I have never, while spinning, lost a jack by striking too *quickly*. When he is struck, hold him hard, and play him cannily.

If in good condition, well baked, with a pudding inside, and very simple sauce, the pike will satisfy you that your labour has not been thrown away.

I hardly know whether I shall appear to be presuming on my reader's patience, but I cannot resist the temptation to give an account of the capture of a very large pike I was fortunate enough to catch in Loch Awe many years since.

One does not go to *Scotland* for *pike*-fishing. The fisherman who travels northward is supposed to be in search of higher game; and there are many lakes in Scotland abounding with pike which are rarely or never fished for them, the angler being generally ignorant of their existence. In fact, the introduction of pike to Scottish waters is of comparatively recent date. Eighty years ago there was not one in Loch Awe; they were put in by some evil-disposed or officious person and increased, as their nature is, beyond all reason, to the manifest diminution of the trout, perhaps of the salmon. Every reedy bay or shallow inlet was stocked with this ravenous fish; and Kilchurn Bay, near Dalmally, at the head of the lake, perhaps afforded as good pike-fishing as was to be found in the United Kingdom. Such is not the case now; pike are well nigh extirpated, and trout reign in their stead.

I wonder have any of my readers ever visited Dalmally? If not, let them shape their course thither the first opportunity that a dull season or a long vacation offers. There is no scenery in Scot-

land, or, to *my* thinking, out of it that surpasses—there is very little that approaches—that of the Western Highlands. Its beauty is only equalled by its variety; moss, moor, and mountain alternate with rich pastures and fertile corn-fields; the streams and rivers tumble down the most precipitous courses, presenting a succession of broken water and cascades endless in their variety, and falling at last into lakes stretching to an extent correspondent with the grandeur of the scenery, and studded plentifully with wooded islands. Loch Awe is twenty-four miles in length. Ben Cruachan, the monarch of the mountains which reflect themselves in her bright waters, rises well nigh four thousand feet, and some of the mountains that are his companions are of little inferior height.

At Dalmally, nestled among woods and rocks, stands one of the most comfortable, unpretending hotels to be met with in the North country,\* and I have found very many most comfortable and most reasonable hostelries in that much-abused land. I have no faith in the accounts of those bilious, grumbling tourists who year by year indite their prosy complaints of ill-usage and extortion

\* This hotel still exists, but its spirited proprietor has built, or rented, in addition one of the best hotels in Scotland situate on the north bank of the lake.

for the benefit of the readers of the *Times* in "the silly season," when alone they have the chance of a column. No one is more impatient of imposition than myself; but my motto is, "Live and let live;" and, if tourists would take to their hearts the fact that a Scotch innkeeper has a short twelve weeks out of the year during which he must earn his livelihood, and get the means of paying rent, rates, and taxes, they would hardly complain of being charged 1s. 9d. or 2s. for their breakfast, and 3s. 6d. for their dinner, charges I have seen held up to execration in the public prints, and which I declare I have been almost ashamed to pay, when I considered their inadequacy as compared with the awful amount of the liberal and often expensive viands provided for the vigorous appetite gained in the keen Scotch air. However, to return to the inn at Dalmally. After fishing in Tweed for salmon, I arrived there one afternoon late in October. I found the lake, like the river which ran into it, in high flood; indeed, it had been raining almost incessantly for six weeks, and, judging from appearances, was likely to continue for six weeks more. A slight change in the temperature, which capped the loftier peaks with snow, added greatly to the beauty of the scenery, but by no means lowered the lake, the waters of which



spread over miles of meadow lying around it, and almost laved the walls of the picturesque old castle of Kilchurn. A lake, however, will fish more or less at all times and under all circumstances, so I determined to spin for a pike. My fisherman, one Malcolm, a civil, sturdy Highlander, with a strong predilection for whisky, very keen, and well skilled in his craft, led me, by a sloppy walk of two miles, to the mouth of the "Orchy," the largest of the rivers which empty themselves into Loch Awe. Here we found a useful sort of boat securely fastened by chain and padlock to a projecting alder. Malcolm produced the key, and loosing the boat, after baling her out, for she was half full of water, we rowed for a mile or more down-stream, and "commenced" fishing under the walls of the old castle, but for some hours with little success. Bad as the weather was, there was evidently worse coming. The wind blew in gusts and squalls, driving the mist and foam before it over the troubled waters of the lake; the wild ducks skimmed along close to the surface; the gulls and rooks flitted and drifted high above it; and the sensitive fishes, as usual, lay sulking and fasting in the depths below. I had hooked and returned, very much to Malcolm's disgust, two or three handsome but undersized fish, and killed one of

three or four pounds, when he proposed that we should run out some distance into the lake, round a point of the island on which the castle stands. It was a hard pull, for our course lay into the very eye of the wind. The waves by this time ran very high, and the boat pitched and tossed as she might have done off the North Foreland. At last we reached our ground, and making a long cast from the boat's head as she topped a wave, I struck and hooked a heavy fish. For a minute or more I imagined it was off, and had left my hook stuck in the rock, so solid, heavy, and motionless was the strain on the line. At the end of that time, however, my doubts were removed by the fish stirring, and to some purpose—running out at least forty yards of line, and then stopping abruptly, as though to consider what was next to be done under existing circumstances. With some difficulty, Malcolm kept the boat's head to the wind, and rowed towards the place where, in very deep water, my intended victim lay, doggedly motionless. The strain on the tackle was considerable, for the rod was not, like a salmon-rod, springy to the butt, but comparatively stiff, as spinning-rods must be; and I was forced to humour *Esox lucius* a good deal, as the boat danced up and down. "He's twenty pounds, Malcolm, if he's an ounce!" "Hoo! hoo! there's nae fish here the

noo more than fifteen or maybe saxteen pun, and few eneuch of them. It's a big beast though, deil doot it." At length I came nearly over the fish and tried to lift it a bit. I might as easily have lifted the rock behind which it lay. But in a second or two it took the matter entirely into its own hands (as I might say in the West of *Ireland*), running up the lake, at a slower pace certainly, but with greater strength, and for a greater distance, than any salmon I have ever hooked. I began to think that the hundred and twenty yards of line which the author of a well-known fishing-book talks of so glibly, as commonly run out by salmon, might be the fact in the case of a pike. However, after clearing my reel of some forty or fifty yards, I felt I had a pull on the fish, and winding up my line as quickly as possible, I brought it under the point of the rod, and eventually raised it to the surface. Such a monster I had never before beheld! A salmon of thirty pounds is a grand fish, but there is nothing *terrible* in his appearance, as there really was in that of my monster pike. As the head appeared above the wave, the beast made a rush, the shoulders and part of the back well above water, the savage mouth wide open, and for fifteen or twenty yards dashed along with a force which, if resisted, would

have broken a rope, making the water boil again, lashing it, seemingly more in rage than despair, with its powerful tail. Happily my gear worked well, and dropping the point of the rod, and easing the line a bit, I let it run as far as it would, and then brought it cannily back again. Three times, each with diminished force, did the deluded beast try with mad rushes to break the good tackle, and then, grimly succumbing, floated helpless on its side. Fortunately, I had brought a gaff with me, and Malcolm, by its aid, speedily transferred my capture to the boat. It was a splendid fish, in capital condition, and weighed fully thirty pounds, the largest pike that has ever come under my personal notice as killed by rod and line. I forwarded it at once to Mr. Frank Buckland, who most kindly "cast" it for me. The cast was painted by the eminent artist Mr. H. L. Rolfe, and having been "set up" in a case forms a most interesting object in my house. It is, independently of the great size of the object, really a work of high art, and could not possibly be distinguished, lying in a bed of dried rushes, from a real fish. The skin was afterwards stuffed, and is still honoured by a place in Mr. Buckland's museum at South Kensington. The skin was, however, much shrunk by the heat of the plaster, and a very inade-

quate notion of the original dimensions can be obtained from the stuffed specimen. Mr. Buckland, in his notice of the fish in *Land and Water*, said, "The pike arrived by the limited mail in perfect condition. She is one of the handsomest fish I ever saw. The tiger-like, dark chocolate markings are beautifully seen. She is full of roe, the total weight of which is twenty-one ounces. By weighing a series of separate grains, and averaging the result, I find the total number of eggs in this one fish is 292,320."

#### FLY-FISHING.

Fly-fishing for pike sounds somehow like a contradiction in terms. Flies for jack seem something like Mr. Bumble's cheese for the sick pauper, or the economical Lady Bountiful's Soyer-soup at three farthings a quart. I have, however, taken jack—under a pound weight, certainly, but still jack—both with the May-fly and the March brown. I need hardly say that in both cases I was fishing for trout, but the fish took the fly and was taken.

I have, however, little doubt that the so-called fly used in fishing for pike is taken by that voracious monster for a newly-hatched moor-hen, dab-chick, or duck, for which he has a decided pre-

dilection, clearing off, one by one, a whole brood of the twittering, unconscious, helpless victims. No doubt the increase of water-fowl is greatly kept in check by the ravages of the pike. No sooner is a brood launched upon the waves of life, and of their native element, than, by some telegraphic means of which we are ignorant, the fact seems to be communicated to the biggest jack in the neighbourhood, who immediately commences "decimating" them after an Irish fashion, that is, by eating nine out of ten of the downy morsels.

Fly-fishing, as it is styled, for jack, is, however, a very artistic and sportsmanlike mode of capturing him. There is much skill required in playing the lure, and the fish, with a single moderate-sized hook slightly struck into his hard jaw, shows more sport and enjoys a better chance of escape, than under any other circumstances. The method is very little understood or practised; indeed, except in stews and still lakes, where the fish is abundant and the bait scarce, it would be ineffective. I therefore give it by no means the prominence it would otherwise deserve. The original inventor, if I may so style it, of the system was I think the late Lord Gage, who practised it successfully in the large pieces of artificial water in his park at Firle, near Lewes, out of which water I have myself taken

with the fly fish of fifteen pounds weight. Pike flies, if flies they can be called, are composed as to the body almost exclusively of the grey feathers taken from the mallard, the wing from a peacock's tail. A thin silver twist is wound round the body to attract the attention of the fish, and the head is indifferently black, red, or blue, furnished with two beads as eyes. In addition to the large salmon-hook generally employed, a smaller one is tied under the feathers on the same plane, but on the opposite side, and is doubtless very effective. So far from dressing the fly in a fashion to make it swim truly, a great desideratum in salmon-flies, it is more effective if, when drawn through the water, it "wobble" slightly, so as to resemble as nearly as possible the action of a newly-born aquatic bird. The rod required for this sport is the same as that used for salmon-fishing, but more stiff. Fine gimp must be attached in lieu of the gut casting-line, or the fish will nip it in twain with his sharp teeth, as a sempstress bites her thread.

The pike is classed by Yarrell as the chief of the family of *Esocidæ*, which numbers among its members the flying-fish. It is the *Esox lucius* of Linnæus, the "pickerill" of ancient writers. The family is tolerably old, being noticed by various writers as early as the reign of Richard II. When

in condition, the pike may be considered a handsome fish; and being bold and fearless of close examination, is liked in ornamental waters; but there is something savage and displeasing in its aspect. The single dorsal fin is placed very far back, near the tail, and is of large size and immense power. To their united action is due the wonderful rapidity with which the fish moves through the water when in pursuit of its prey or escaping from danger.



## PART II.

# Tweed.

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### THE TROUT.

I CONFESS to approaching the subject of trout-fishing—"trouting," as it is generally called in the North—with considerable diffidence. So much has been written on the subject, and so well written, that it seems a work of supererogation to add to the quantity; but a fishing-book containing no chapter upon trout-fishing would be "Hamlet" with the part of Hamlet left out; and I therefore, as in previous chapters, offer to the young angler the results of my own experience and observation for just what they may be worth.

When I commenced writing the present volume I determined not to "read up," to consult no authorities, and to record no experiences except my own; this on no principle of vanity, or supposing that I could learn nothing, but from a desire of

avoiding repetition of truisms, or the promulgation of erroneous dogmas vouched for by recognised authorities. I have observed, in all books of Natural History, the great mischief which arises from the system of "reading up." Naturalists are not infallible, however scientific, accurate, and observant they may generally be; and if one in good repute make a mistake—and I never read a book on the subject without detecting many—every subsequent writer adopts, and so perpetuates it.

Before discussing the subject, I will record—only to show the extreme divergence of opinion that existed, and probably still exists, among writers on the subject of angling—a few random notes which I accidentally stumbled upon in an old memorandum-book, and which I had extracted from various authors some fifty years ago, when I first became a follower of the "gentle art." Here they are:—

"*Rods.*—A rod cannot be too stiff; it is impossible to throw a line lightly, or at all against the wind, with a pliable rod."

"Purchase your rod in Ireland; they are always pliable, and play from the butt: no *fisherman* will condescend to use a stiff rod."

"*Flies.*—The colour of your fly must be adapted to that of the water—a dark fly for dark water, a bright fly for bright water."

“It is useless fishing in dark water with a dark fly.”

“The brighter the water, the darker the fly, and *vice versâ*.”

“In trout-fishing three or four flies should be used.”

“No fly-fisher requires more than one or two flies on his cast.”

“*Reels*.—A multiplying reel is indispensable in fly-fishing.”

“A multiplying reel is a mockery and a snare; it is sure to fail you at the pinch.”

I cordially assent to this last dogma; but I have merely selected the above, from some dozens more or less contradictory, to show how widely really practical men differ in their opinions on the most essential points, and to justify my offering advice founded exclusively on the results of my own experience and practice. The only books, indeed, that have come under my notice of late years are Mr. Marston's beautiful edition of “Walton's Complete Angler,” Stewart's “Practical Angler,” and the volume of the Badminton Library devoted to the salmon. From the perusal, or re-perusal of the first, I derived infinite pleasure, but, in a fishing sense, little profit. In his day, no doubt, the quaint, simple-minded, loving old man was a good fisherman, and his precepts held in deservedly high repute; but “well-a-day, their date is fled;” his precepts are now obsolete, his teachings forgotten, no “scholar” would

now sit reverentially at his feet, and the deserved popularity of his work is due to the sweet simplicity of its style more than to any hints on the practice of the art of fishing that can be obtained from its perusal. Mr. Stewart's little book is eminently practical, and may be studied by the tiro\* with profit. I differ with him in his estimate of the comparative advantages of a stiff or springy rod. He preferred the former, alleging that with it the strike was much more quickly made; perhaps so, but with a stiff rod I have never experienced any failure from want of rapidity in striking, and when a fish is struck, though you cannot haul him out of water by the hair of his head, as it were, you are very much less likely to lose him; and the sport shown by a fish hooked with a springy rod is far greater than when a stiff one is used. To fish *up*-stream was Mr. Stewart's grand specific for sport; and in sluggish streams, with the wind blowing up, no doubt it is the true way to fill your basket, and should, where practicable, be adopted. I once found myself fishing in a Hampshire stream of this description. The water was not only sluggish but very dirty. I had one side only, and three

\* "Tiro," improperly spelt "tyro."—*Johnson's Dictionary*.

gentlemen were fishing the other. They fished down-stream and killed three fish ; I fished up-stream and killed ten.

Most trout streams, however, run rapidly ; and it is to me more of a toil than a pleasure to keep perpetually whipping, while your flies are returned almost instantaneously, and, unless you are very expert, occasionally in a state of entanglement. In worm-fishing, no doubt the up-stream fashion is very much the most killing ; and, as you fish with but one hook and a short line, the objections I have referred to do not apply ; but I hate—(I won't say despise ; for no one has a right to despise a mode adopted and much esteemed by others)—I hate worm-fishing for trout. There is something refined and poetical about trouting which is hardly in unison with an impaled worm. The play shown by a fish thus hooked is very inferior, as the bait is generally swallowed, and your pull is from the gullet at best, instead of the hard palate or bony, unsensitive lip. All fishermen who fish for their livelihood, and not for sport, adopt this killing, and, to my mind, less sportsmanlike method. However, there are times of drought and flood, and times of the year when the fly is worthless as a lure, and there are streams so small in their dimensions as to preclude its use. In such cases,

the worms may be fairly used. Scour them thoroughly. This is best done in clean, dampish moss, changed daily for four or five days, always pressing it tightly, and placing the worms at the top. They will squeeze themselves through to the bottom of the vessel, and in so doing get rid of the earthly aliment always present in them when freshly dug. Use a No. 8 hook, and, unless the water is very fine, tolerably strong tackle. A single shot, three or four inches above the hook, will sink it and cause the bait to play. Your rod is short and stiff. Walk *up* the stream, and throw a very short line a few feet before you, allowing the bait to fall back with the stream into every little hole or eddy caused by a sudden turn or a submerged stone. When conscious of a bite, allow a short time to elapse before striking; and though you may not have much sport, you will catch plenty of fish.

The best months for trouting with the fly are April and May, or, in some waters, May and June.\* When the May-fly goes down, about the middle or end of June, the trout are fat, shy and lazy. They come on to the feed again in the autumn, and, though the fish then taken are undoubtedly smaller,

\* Worm-fishing begins in July, and may be advantageously carried on to the end of the season.

as heavy a basket may be made in the Northern streams with the fly in September, as in any month of the year.

The best days for trout-fishing are cloudy, breezy, and warm, the water slightly coloured from recent rains, but not swollen; and if, having these advantages, the glass is rising, and really there are trout in the water, it is your own fault if you do not catch them.

Fishing-tackle makers and fishing-books, which are generally written in their interest, provide a change of flies for every month in the year, and almost for every day in the month; but the best trouters I have ever known carry but few varieties in their books, and are generally chary of changing their cast, even though the fish decline taking as readily as might be wished. Of course, I do not mean that one fly, like one Irishman, is as good as another,—“or better;” but I think that, with one or two exceptions, where nature can be closely imitated,—the March brown, the red ant, the stone fly, the gray and green drake, the black and brown palmers, for instance,—size and colour have more to do with the question of taking than anything else has. There are some flies which fish in certain rivers affect, but which are almost useless elsewhere. I have never killed trout in any Southern

stream with the little "white-tip," so famous on Tweed, and I believe that neither the "governor" nor the "coachman" are of much avail out of the Southern and Midland Counties. My object is not, however, to go into detail on this or any other branch of my subject. I advise my readers to provide good store of the flies I have named as standard flies, and trust to local experience and the advice of friends in filling up the spaces of their book as occasion arises.

In fishing for trout, it is essential to keep as far from the bank as you reasonably can, and never to allow your shadow to fall on the water. Shadows terrify fish even more than they did the Third Richard on the eve of battle; and though fishes are supposed—I think proved—to be incapable of hearing, in the ordinary sense, I am convinced that the quieter you are, the better your chances. Although unfurnished with ears, fish are singularly sensitive, and may be perfectly conscious of the vibration of the air caused by sound, though not striking on a tympanum.

The wind being to your back, or on your quarter, commence—fishermen, I know not why, always use the term "commence" for "begin")—commence fishing at the head of the pool or rapid; throw a short line at first, and cover the ground



nearest to you, gradually lengthening your throw as you proceed, but never letting out more line than you can perfectly well manage. If loose in the water, you cannot strike rapidly; and though a fish may hastily mistake a sham for a real fly, he speedily finds out his mistake, and before you can get the line taut, as it ought to have been at first, has spit it out contemptuously three feet from him. The fall of the fly on the water is the most killing moment, and you must, therefore, be careful that the *fly* touches the water first. A yard or two of line flopping in the water is apt to scare the fish, and take off his attention from the falling fly, though he may not connect the two together in his own mind. Under the bank is generally the most likely lie for a trout; but there is no absolute necessity for him to choose the opposite one.\* If the further bank be beyond reach, content yourself with fishing under the one on which you stand, which you may do cleverly by throwing a little short of the centre of the stream and working the cast round. A tremulous motion imparted to the stretcher as it falls on the water is decidedly captivating; but the killing movement

\* An angler, especially a young one, is apt to be bitten *ripæ ulterioris amore*, and in straining after the distant shadow, neglect the proximate substance.

is that which, without dragging, impels the fly along the water in a more or less gliding fashion, stopping at intervals as water-insects do. The stretcher, by the way, is the end fly, and generally the largest, the more readily to retain its precedence; the others are called "droppers," and when two or more are used, should be fastened by a small loop to the casting line, five and three feet from the stretcher. If your cast be composed of flies of the same size, fix the most likely one as a stretcher—the chances are three to one in favour of its first attracting the notice of the fish, and first impressions are, as every one knows, all important.

In trouting from the bank, under ordinary circumstances, a landing-net is not necessary—the largest fish may be coaxed on to a shelving bank without difficulty, and if a lift be necessary, use your hands, *not* the line. When wading, it is different; unless you are prepared to lead every fish to the bank, which in broad streams is a sad waste of time, a landing-net is indispensable. A belt round the waist will be found very convenient to stick the handle through, and if kept well behind will not be in the way.

Spinning the minnow is a deadly mode of capturing trout, especially large trout. In the Thames it is

almost the only recognised method of fishing, and some fishermen have attained marvellous skill in the art of throwing and working the lure.

A good-sized minnow is without doubt the most effective bait; but there are various imitations, especially the "phantom" minnow, which are almost as effective, and much less troublesome. Whether a real or sham bait be used, the great object is to make it spin truly; the *wobble*, apparently so seductive in the case of the pike, has the very opposite effect with the trout: your bait must spin as evenly and truly as the worm of a screw.

A long cast is frequently necessary, and great skill in the management of the bait when it falls in the water is essential to ensure success. A fish once hooked, however, ought seldom to escape. Your hooks are strong and numerous, your tackle, though not coarse, capable of bearing any reasonable strain; and a Thames trout, though a strong fish, and sometimes weighing from eight to twelve pounds, does not display anything like the generalship of a salmon when fighting for his life. Large trout are taken with the fly in the Thames, but the prevalence of the pike must ever prevent its becoming a really good trouting river.

In the Tweed, the Esk, the Dee, or in any broad wading river in Scotland or Wales, where good trout abound, the fisherman should not only be provided with his bait-kettle, duly immersed in some cool, sequestered spot, but also with a small can attached to the strap by which his landing-net is suspended, such can containing six or eight live minnows with which to rebait when necessary.

Trout will no doubt take a stale bait, a salted bait, or a sham bait, but they have a decided predilection for a fresh one.

The trout, I need not say, is of the noble family of *Salmo*, and is distinguished as *Salmo fario*. Wide differences will be observed both in size, shape, and colour in specimens taken from different streams, lakes, and rivers. The weight varies from a few ounces to ten or twelve pounds; and while some streams afford fish of handsome shape and bright colours, others are inhabited by lanky, dusky specimens, pale-fleshed and almost worthless to eat. I consider that the great cause of these differences is the food. Where that is plentiful the fish grow and thrive; where it is not, or there are too many mouths to partake of it, they are, as a natural result, lean and ill-favoured. No doubt, however, there are many distinct species of trout

which have never yet been classed by ichthyologists.

### THE GRAYLING.

The grayling (*Salmo thymallus*) is essentially a monkish fish; at least it is said to have been introduced by the monks, who

“ Made gude kail  
On Fridays when they fasted.”

And the legend is corroborated by the alleged fact of the fish being found in no streams but those on the banks of which old monasteries stood.

I must remark that I do not recollect having myself met with grayling in Thames, or even Tweed, but they are found in the tributaries of both rivers.

The term *thymallus* is derived from a supposed smell of thyme emitted by the fish when first taken out of the water. I confess that, though I have smelt with the nose of faith, I have never been able to detect it.

“ When cats is out,” Sam Weller tells us, “ fruit is in.” When trout are out of season and cease to rise at the fly, grayling are in season, and afford most excellent sport. The mode of fishing is precisely the same as that adapted for trout, but the flies should be smaller and finer, and the strike

more instantaneous on the rise—in fact, it is impossible to strike *too* quickly. In deep clear water the fish may be seen rising almost from the bottom, and the moment you see him you may strike, and when you strike you do so with a tolerable certainty of hooking your fish. The enormous back fin enables the grayling to rise with a rapidity no other fish can: it shoots upwards, seizes the fly, and descends in less time than the motion of your hand can follow: the dive of the dabchick, which disappears at the flash of the gun, is the only thing in nature which, within my experience, equals the grayling's quickness; strike therefore, as I have said, at the *rise*. The grayling comes into season in September, and may be fished for throughout the winter months. Perhaps the best streams are the Derbyshire Wye and Derwent, but it has been introduced into many others. As a rule, it avoids the swift streams, and when introduced into such is generally found to descend gradually lower and lower, until it finally disappears.

### WHITE TROUT.

Whether the white trout — *Salmo trutta* of Linnæus and of Yarrell—be, as some naturalists affirm, identical with the bull or gray trout—*Salmo*

*eriox*—it is not my purpose in this place to inquire. I think not; I think that the fish are entirely different, and that there are a great many distinct species of trout which have not yet been classed or described. There is the “sewin,” for instance, which may or may not be the grilse of the white trout. I cannot believe it to be so; if it were, why should it be confined to Welsh rivers only? There is the “parr”—*Salmo salmulus*,—which is so like the young salmon as to be considered identical with it, and which has very properly obtained legislative protection in virtue of the similarity. There is a little barred fish, abundant in the western Irish lakes, which the natives call a “gub,” the diminutive of “gubberhorn,” a term which I believe means “little” in Erse, and is commonly applied to a tricky, semi-malignant spirit recognised by the Irish peasant. These “gubs,” which run from an ounce to a quarter of a pound, are in number numberless, and from their constantly rising at the fly constitute a serious hindrance to white trout fishing. They are yellow, well-shaped fish, with five or six well-defined dusky marks across the back and sides. I do not think that any naturalist has as yet classed or named them, but I trust they may find a place in the next work on the natural history of fishes.

To resume the subject of white trout, I am content to follow Yarrell, and to consider it a distinct fish, and fully entitled, by its various good qualities, to the precedence over other trout apparently expressed by the affix *trutta*. Handsome in shape, harmonious in colour, delicious to eat, a free riser, and a sufficiently game fish, there is in my opinion none that excels, none that equals, the white trout in the qualities most desired in a fish; and I hold that a good day's white trout fishing in one of the western Irish lakes is about as enjoyable as anything that falls to man's lot in this weary world.

I have said that the white trout is *sufficiently* game; by that I mean that he gives most excellent sport, running out many yards of line, jumping out of the water three or four times in succession to such a height as to bring your heart into your mouth, and try all your skill, dashing hither and thither, sometimes round the boat, sometimes under it, but never sulking, never attempting to cut the line or rub the hook out of its mouth, or take any other unfair advantage of the honest angler, but, when fairly beaten, admitting the fact, and coming into the net without useless resistance.

The best days for white trout fishing are rough stormy ones—the rougher and stormier indeed the



better. I have been out when four strong men could with difficulty keep the boat's head to the wind, or prevent her drifting bodily on to a lee-shore; but there is comparatively little art in killing fish in such weather, they are certain to hook themselves, and neither coarse tackle nor rough flies will materially prejudice your sport. When the sun shines bright, and the water is clear, and the weather calm, it is a different thing altogether; fine tackle and good throwing are absolutely essential; and the longer the cast, the finer the tackle, and the softer the fall of the fly on the water, the better the result.

The superiority of the springy rod over the stiff one is exemplified in nothing more than in fishing for white trout; the wild jumps of the fish are rendered ineffectual by the give-and-take action of the elastic rod; and when, as is frequently the case, the fish rushes under the boat, you have only to let the point descend well into the water, and passing under the keel renew its position on the other side.

White trout fishing is generally practised with two rods in the boat, one at each end; the boat is rowed up-wind, and allowed to drift back over the favourite spots, "broadside on." Various flies are used on different lakes,—the size and colour

depending upon the state of the water ; but whatever the fly, it should never be without a piece of gold or silver twist round the body—the latter for choice. The mode of playing is to draw it rather rapidly towards the end of the boat from which you are fishing, but quite clear of it. You can hardly strike too quickly at a rise, at least with fish under a pound, larger ones must have time to “turn round.”

A fresh-run white trout, cooked within a few hours of its capture, is about as delicious a dish as can be set before an epicure. Those who purchase salmon trout from their fishmonger in London have very little notion of what the fish was when first taken.

The best white trout fishing in the United Kingdom—perhaps in the world—is to be found in the West of Ireland. It was there that, in direct opposition to the views of better and more experienced fishermen than myself, I established, to my own satisfaction at least, the principle of fine fishing for white trout. I had arrived at one of the most beautiful and most hospitable dwellings in that beautiful and hospitable country, one lovely morning in August. I had been travelling all night and all the preceding day, but there is nothing more refreshing after a long journey than a day's

fishing, especially if not of a fatiguing nature. Lake-fishing is always easy, at least to the principal parties concerned; though the boatmen in that stormy district often have a hard time of it. I have known four strong men, pulling with all their might, occupy two hours in getting to the head of a lake not two miles distant, and scarcely then attain their object. Such was not the case on the occasion I refer to. The surface of the lake was smooth as a mill-pond; the mountains, which formed a natural wall a thousand feet in height, against which the waters rested, and which, for aught I know, sustained them to an equal depth below, the red berries of the rowan, and the white fleeces of the sheep which fed, in some miraculous manner, along the almost perpendicular face of the rock, reflected as in a mirror.

Fishing was pronounced to be out of the question, a delusion, an absurdity, a mockery; but I had travelled six hundred miles to fish, and fish I would, though offered all sorts of apparently more feasible outlets for the destructive energy which Cobbet declares, not without truth, to be the distinctive mark of all English country gentlemen. "Come, let us go forth," says my host after breakfast, "and see which of God's creatures we can slay!" Rabbit-shooting, sea-fishing, seal-shooting,

flapper-hunting, grouse-shooting, even goat-stalking (for there is a wild breed of goats which inhabit those mountains, active as chamois, and difficult to approach as red-deer), were in vain suggested and in turn rejected. In the end I had my way, and, like "the swans on sweet St. Mary's lake," we floated double on the surface of ours, "boat and shadow." With a light rod, a fine line, and a London-made bottom scarce thicker than a hair, I commenced fishing, and, to the surprise of my companions, shortly rose and hooked a good fish. There were better fishermen than myself in the boat, but their tackle was comparatively coarse, and I think that I am within the mark when I say that I caught two fish to their one. In the course of the day we killed full thirty white trout, and the merits of extremely fine fishing have ever since been recognised in those pleasant quarters.

### THE SALMON.

"How you, who are so fond of hunting, can have patience for fishing!" is a remark that has frequently been made to me. "Fish? No! I have not patience for fishing," is a remark I have often heard. What, then! is patience, not the least among the cardinal virtues, sunk so low in modern

estimation that its possession is rather deemed derogatory than otherwise? But patience alone, highly as we prize the virtue, will not make a fisherman, far less a fisher of salmon. Have you a quick eye, a light hand, a strong arm, a swift foot? above all, have you strong nerves and a cool head? Have you skill to throw a long, light line, and coolness to stand on a slippery rock to do it? Is your wind all right, and does your pulse beat true time? All these physical qualities will find ample scope in salmon-fishing, and without them do not hope to excel. I remember, years since,—

“When my limbs were strong and my courage was high,”—

going forth with my rod one close, hot day in September, to a favourite pool in the Owen Duff, in Ballycroy—at that time my own property from mouth to source—to throw a fly for the last time that season. It was because I was bound to leave the same evening that I went out; a more hopeless attempt was never made. The sun was bright, there was “no wind in the air,” it was a breathless calm; the heavy rain of the previous night had swollen the river, and it was at the time coming down in a dark flood, level, and sometimes over the banks. However, as it was my last day, I was determined to throw a fly, though but for the

pleasure of throwing it. Walking up to the Greensod Pool, I commenced operations. My fly was an Inch-y-quin of the largest size, as is fitting in heavy waters, and there are few, if any, more killing flies on the western Irish waters. Kelly, of Dublin, ties it admirably, and the late Mr. Lees, of sporting and post-office celebrity, then my guest, never fished with any other. Beginning at the tail of the rapid which feeds the pool, I threw a long line well over. At the first cast there was a palpable break in the water. Could it be a fish? In such a state of things I could not believe it possible; it must have been a piece of floating bogwood, or a mass of turf torn from the bank, and hurried down the boiling stream! Again I threw, and the fly floated with the stream a few feet above the spot where the break, if break it was, had been. There was no mistake this time, the dorsal fin and several inches of the back of a monstrous fish were plainly visible above the surface of the dark water. My heart was in my mouth, but I had recourse to the old formula, which ought to be present to every salmon-fisher's mind—*one, he comes up! two, he goes down! three, I strike!* I did so, perhaps more forcibly than was altogether safe or necessary: it is curious how little force, if properly applied, is required to fix the hook. I struck with

effect ; and in another second I was dashing along the rough, flooded, dangerous bank at the speed of a foxchase after my destined prey. No time for thought or pause—no chance of picking footsteps or choosing my course. The stream was running ten miles an hour, and the fish appeared to resign himself entirely to it ; sometimes rolling over, sometimes sailing almost on the surface, sometimes diving to the depths below, he carried on directly towards the sea, from whence no doubt he had travelled that very morning ; fortunately, my line at the first cast was not of any great length, and the fifty yards in reserve constituted a handicap in the unequal race ; but every nerve was strained to the utmost to prevent a breakage, which would inevitably have occurred had I failed for a moment in wind or speed. A ditch, some ten feet wide, full to the brim, intersected my path. “Jump, Jemmy, and give me a help on the other side !” Jemmy did so, and in his excitement offered me, as I landed, the sharp end of the gaff—the gaff itself, in fact—instead of the handle. I sprang over, and, avoiding the proffered aid (?), was safely lugged up the opposite bank by my faithful but confused attendant. A terrible moment of suspense ensued. In the jump I had necessarily slackened the line ; had the fish escaped ? For a moment my heart

sank within me, but throwing the butt of the rod well forward, and rapidly winding up the line, I found, to my intense joy, that the fish was still firmly hooked. We were now in Pwllgarrow, and for the first time I got a real pull at him. The broad, deep water apparently suggested a change of tactics; and, after swimming for a few minutes up and down, the fish sought the depths below, and rested like a log at the bottom, with the weight of thirty feet of water upon him. Meanwhile, with my arms fully employed, and almost altogether held high above my head, I was exposed to the attacks of myriads of midges and troops of horse-flies. The air, as I have said, was still sultry and oppressive; and surely the fox in the fable, or the carrier at Gadshill, was never better bitten or stung. I suffered terribly. The fish lay like a log, or rather a rock, at the bottom: how to move him was the point. I then tried for the first time what I believe to be the only available "tactic" under such circumstances. Lowering the point of my rod until it touched, nay, entered the water, I kept up a long, strong, steady, continuous pull at the full tension which my tackle would bear, in a direction almost at a right angle with the line of the fish, as he lay with his head up-stream. The effect, though it was some time before it became apparent,



was, no doubt, to cause him considerable difficulty in holding his position; gradually, and by slow degrees, he would attempt to ease the strain upon him, slightly turning his head in the direction of the pull. As in all temptations, the first downward step was a stride on the road to ruin. The large surface of his side exposed obliquely, in however small a degree, to the force of the stream, rendered the position untenable, and in half a minute more he was careering through the pool, and running his headlong race seaward. There is a gorge not far below, through which the water hurries at great speed, the bank on one side shelving abruptly down to the rocky edge. Here Jemmy, well knowing that the salmon would pass down the rapid at a comparatively slow pace, and, of necessity, close to the shore, had stationed himself in advance, the ready gaff, already plunged into the water, in his hand. As the fish passed, Jemmy, standing knee-deep in the stream, struck him well and fairly, and, half overpowered with his weight and the strength of the stream, struggled manfully ashore, landing him at my feet with a triumphant yell that might have graced the victor in a faction-fight. The salmon weighed full twenty pounds. I overheard Jemmy subsequently giving a detail of the exploit to a brother fisherman; his

narrative was more poetic, but less accurate, than my own. "The weight was near thirty pounds. The master, more power to him ! had run two miles without stopping, barrin' the halt the skaming vagabond" (not meaning the master) "had made in Pwlgarrow ; he'd surely have got to the say itself," but for the prodigious acumen and wonderful pluck of Jemmy himself ; winding up with "and when his honour saw the baste lying there, and me atop of him, 'Jemmy, you blaggard,' he says, 'that's the foinest gaff that ever was made in or out of Ballycroy,' says he, 'and there's half-a-crown for ye !'" Whether the hint was taken matters not to my readers, and I must apologise for the egotistical character of this episode ; but I was anxious to show that patience is not the *only* requisite in salmon-fishing.

In this fight I found the advantage of the springy rod. The fish rushing madly along, myself following over stock and stone, sometimes jumping, sometimes scrambling, sometimes tumbling, it would have been impossible, with a stiff rod, to have kept that steady, constant, unremitting hold on the fish which maintains the grip of the hook in his mouth. The springy rod compensates for all irregularities by its accommodating elasticity, and I firmly believe, from its persistent though no doubt

weaker strain, kills the fish in less time. I hate the drivelling, tedious, delicate mode of handling a fish practised by many, no doubt, good fishermen. I read of fish being "on" for six, eight, even twelve hours, and in the end, perhaps, lost. "The play is not worth the candle." I have been an hour or a little over before I killed my fish, but that has been under special circumstances, and has happened to me very rarely indeed. As a rule, little over a minute to the pound is sufficient, just as a penny a minute will, under ordinary circumstances, pay, if it do not satisfy, a cabman. I know I ought to kill more deliberately—*secundum artem*, as Molière's doctors would say, but I am content to kill *absque morâ*. One of the largest fish I ever captured, him whose antecedents are duly recorded in "The Autobiography of *Salmo Salar*,"\* weighed thirty pounds, and was gaffed within little more than forty-five minutes from the time he was hooked. I killed several fish last season from eighteen to twenty pounds, and not one took more than twenty-five minutes to kill. A fish, from the time he is hooked, should never be allowed one second to breathe, far less to collect his ideas and mature his plans for escape. "Butt him, yer sowl!" howls

\* The Autobiography forms portion of "Flood, Field, and Forest," published by Virtue and Co., Limited.

Paddy; "Gie him the butt, mon!" shouts Sandy; "Stick to him, run with him, never let him rest," say I. And never forget that the fish running down stream swims tail first. Keep, therefore, level, or a little below him.

The art and mystery of fly-tying is a great art and a great mystery. You must "tie" something which has no "correlative" existence in the heavens above or in the earth beneath, or, which is most to the point, in the waters under the earth, and which, at the same time, must differ in no important requisite of motion, appearance, or colour from things which really have existence. A superstition long existed that salmon, during their sojourn in fresh water, lived like the last victim to incredulous science—the Welsh fasting-girl—without food. The fact that unscrupulous fishermen found a parr-tail, a gudgeon, half an eel, or a dollop of fat worms, a most killing bait, rather shook the theory; and although there are some still credulous enough to believe that their victim is seduced into toying with the exquisitely painted morsel they have provided for him out of sheer admiration for the artistic merit displayed, just as there are some very young men who believe that the bouncing school-girl he sits next to really keeps up her stamina on the tiny morsels she so daintily toys

with at the dinner-table, the notion is now exploded. The salmon is, in truth, a greedy feeder, the kelt, a most voracious one, his digestion, like his appetite, is very active, and, in common with birds and beasts of prey, when in difficulties, he ejects the food recently swallowed; hence the myth which no one takes the trouble to verify or disprove, that no food is ever found in the stomach of the recently-killed fish. What a salmon conceives an artificial fly to be it is difficult to say—probably some marine insect or embryo form he has been accustomed to in the recently-quitted sea, or which his instinct tells him he may expect to find in his new quarters. The latter hypothesis explains to my mind the superiority of one fly over another in different waters; there is no question but that local flies, even of the roughest manufacture, are more effective than the most beautifully-tied specimens which are used with deadly results in other waters. Try, for instance, one of those grey or red, rough, wingless, palmer-like monstrosities (locally designated "grubs" and "scorpions") so deservedly popular on the Usk; try it on the Spey, or the Tweed, or in fact on almost any other river, and what will be the result? I venture to say you would never raise a fish; and the best of my Tweed flies have been treated on the Usk with a contempt

they hardly deserved. I doubt not that, were the insect inhabitants of the different rivers captured and compared, there would be found some striking points of resemblance between the artificial flies and the respective living creatures which they accidentally simulate. My readers may object that the gaudy feathers employed present a gorgeous spectacle quite unlike the sober colours of the creatures which inhabit the slimy depths of salt or fresh water ; but they must remember that the confused mass soaked in the water is totally different from the bright hues with which, dry and finished, it comes from the tyer's hands ; besides, except that of the jay, which is always used in the breast, and the golden pheasant, which generally somewhat protrudes, the brightest feathers are on the back of the fly, and, if it float properly, concealed from the vision of the fish.

For myself, I cannot tie a fly—I tried formerly, and partially succeeded, but I can buy infinitely better ones at a very moderate cost, and in general the fisherman on the water will, for a trifling consideration, especially if you are genial in manner and skilful in practice, supply you with far better flies than the most skilful amateur can produce, or money purchase. Still, I by no means decry the art ; it is most useful, and to those whose

time is sufficiently at their own command I strongly recommend the acquirement of it. The best way is to take lessons at one of the London or Dublin shops ; the fee is, I believe, generally a guinea.

To my mind, a knowledge of the size and pervading hue of the fly is much more important than the pattern, the size must be regulated by that of the water, and the colour in a great degree by its colour. Fish object to startling incongruities ; a small fly is useless in a heavy water, and in a light one a large fly only scares the fish ; small, bright flies, are essential in small bright water, and large flies, conspicuous with gold or silver twist, tell best in heavy, dark water.

The number of flies to be used depends upon circumstances. The late Mr. Francis, in his comprehensive work upon angling, published some years since, says "two or three ;" but except in his work I never heard the latter number suggested, or of their being used by any salmon-fisher. In rivers like the Tweed, the bank, on one side of which, at least, is shelving, and generally free from rocks, and in lakes clear of water-weed, two flies may *sometimes*, though very rarely, be used with advantage ; but I question whether the disadvantages do not preponderate. Two flies, no doubt, afford the opportunity of practically testing the

questions what size and what predominant colour is for the time being most in accord with the fish's capricious taste, and you have, as it were, a double chance; the extent of a fish's vision must begin and end somewhere, and one fly may be within while the other is beyond his ken. Two flies, again, are more likely to attract his attention than one, and there is the chance, if he miss the fly he rises at, of your hooking him "foul" with the other. On the other hand, if there be a rock, or a weed, or a post, you are sure to be hung up on it, in which case you inevitably lose your fish. This you constantly do at the last moment by the disengaged fly catching in the landing-net, a weed, a twig, or the bank itself, up which the fish is actually being raised. Again, it not unfrequently happens that, while you are most artistically playing your fish on the stretcher, your fish all unconsciously is as artistically, and with equal effect, playing the dropper—the result, the hooking of a second fish of equal or larger size, the two immediately commencing a wild round dance, diversified with occasional antagonistic tugs, and ending with breakage of tackle and the escape of both. There is, however, sometimes an advantage in fishing with two flies, which, though it must come under the category of a "fluke," may fairly be placed to the credit side, as



may flukes in skittles, croquet, or billiards. Without, therefore, condemning the use of two flies, or altogether ignoring their advantages on some occasions, I advocate and practise the fishing with only one.

A fish foul-hooked, if small, affords capital sport. I assume that most of my readers know that a fish is foul-hooked when, by some chance, the barb has struck on the side, or the tail, or the fin. If small, I say, a fish thus hooked shows capital sport, but a large one has the odds too much in his favour; you may find in such case that you have caught a Tartar, one you cannot take with you, one that will not let you go—it is like riding a pulling horse in a halter; not only does the fish experience no sense of pain (a fish's pain under ordinary circumstances is probably but slight), but you have no command over his movements. Steering apparatus, to be effective, must act either at stem or stern, but here your rudder is like one fixed amidships, and operates as the weather-board of a barge. The fish perhaps turn "broadside on" to the stream, and it would be no easy matter to bring to land even a board or other inanimate substance by means of a line so attached. Add to this the liberty of breathing enjoyed by the fish, the absence of interference with the free play of his

gills, and the odds in his favour may be more readily conceived than calculated.

Under such circumstances a fish must of necessity take a longer time in killing than when he is hooked in the mouth, but it were better to break your line, and let him go free, than to waste a whole day on him.

I will transcribe for the benefit of my readers an abridged account of the killing of a fish foul-hooked, with which Slater, an old fisherman of mine long since dead, favoured me while fishing on the Merton water, and which shows the occasional advantage, before referred to, of having two flies up. Slater, I should say, although worthy, was essentially a prosy individual; he told stories of intolerable length, in which the point bore the same proportions to the verbiage as Mercutio's two grains of wheat did to the bushel of chaff. Omitting incessant "I says" and "says he," and much other surplusage, the narrative ran as follows—(I had been detailing the account as recorded in a sporting paper of a twelve hours' struggle with a salmon):—"I'll no say but that if a beast be foul heukit he may gi'e an awfu' deal of trouble an' tak' a deal of killin'; but twa hours!—hoo! hoo!!!—it's joost nonsense! Did I ever tell ye of a ploy I had on this varra pool wi' one of these foul heukit gentlemen? (Let oot a wee bittie mair line.) Weel, it was last spring; I

wor oot at five o'clock, an' Duncan Gilroy the precentor—(that's line eneuch oot)—had joost askit to hae a throw for a fash—(canny noo! yon's a *grand* bit for a saumon)—an' I allowed him. Weel, he fushed the stream abune, an' he fushed the pool doon to this varra stane we're noo on, an' deil a fin he moved—(yon wor a bad cast—try it again)—so I said, 'Duncan, lad, gi'e me the wand—ye're better at psalmody than saumon-fishing;' so I joost cast ower yonder big stane where the whirlie is. (That was a grand cast, I'm 'maist sure ye rose him then—bide a wee and try that ane again.) Weel, he rose at the bob, an' I heukit him; it wor a grand rise, an' I felt sure I had him fast—a big fash he was, an' clean run, an' varra unaccommodatin' he showed himself, for deil tak' him! he wad gang na gait but his ain, an' that aye the wrang ain. (There, he came agen! ye didna touch him; let me change the flee for ane a wee bittie smaller, an' gi'e him time to turn himself round.) Aweel, I had him on mebbe ten minutes, an' he was beginning to come in, when Duncan, who I'm thinking was more handy wi' the gaff than wi' the rod, stept into the water an' tried to cleik him as he hung on the stream. Weel, he joost missed him, and the fash made a dash doon stream. I thocht he was clean lost

for gude an' a', but he wasna', he was on fast eneuch ; but siccan an' uncanny brute I never had to deal with—he was bad before ; he was ten times worse now, an' it was twa good hours before Duncan stuck the cleik intil him, an' then I found that he had broken the bob out of his mouth, an' the tail fly had stuck into his gill as he made off. Nae wonder he was strong, for he was aughteen pund weight, clean run, an' I don't think that ane of the kye yonder, heukit in the same manner, could ha'e pulled much stronger. (Aye, mon, *ye ha'e him noo !*)"

We have storms in England, storms in London, when umbrellas are turned inside out, old ladies blown against the lamp-posts, and falling chimney-pots make pious sailors thankful that they do not exercise their calling on such a dangerous element as the land ; but such storms as these are zephyr's play when compared with the storms that visit the wild western coast of Ireland ; the waves of the Atlantic come rolling in, each a mile or more in length, and of an unknown altitude, dashing themselves against the everlasting rock with a force which would be irresistible were it not exerted against the immovable, then resolving themselves into harmless spray, flung five hundred feet into the air, or forming huge balls of foam, which bound

across the country like boys' footballs forty times magnified. Further inland, the mighty wind, divided but not conquered by opposing headlands, rushes down through gorge and valley in impetuous blasts, the more dangerous that they come from all sorts of unsuspected quarters and uncalculated directions, lashing the waters of the lakes into no despicable resemblance to those of the mighty ocean. I have known a heavy boat, two or three tons weight, which had been laid keel uppermost on the strand, lifted bodily into the air, like one of Mr. Home's mediums, and dashed down two hundred feet off, breaking in its descent every oaken rib in its body. I have known sheep blown from the rock on which they were feeding and drowned in the lake below. I have seen the waters collected in the form of a wheel, whirled round and carried upwards a hundred feet or more, and then descend in a mass sufficient to swamp a boat. For lake-fishing, especially salmon-fishing, the weather can hardly be too wild, the water too rough; and it was on one of the wildest and roughest of days that a friend of mine, an excellent fisherman, and myself, accompanied by the owner of the house at which we were staying, embarked on the Black Lake. We had scarcely a mile to row to our fishing ground, but it was considerably over an hour

when we reached it. But for the excitement it would have been wearisome to mark the bunch of heather or the black stone, precisely opposite to which, for some five minutes, despite the strongest efforts of our men, we would pitch and toss, apparently without gaining an inch. There were odd points of rock which took longer time to weather, the wonder being that we ever got round them at all.

"It was by dint of passing strength,  
We reach'd our fishing-ground at length."

The stern, the post of honour, was kindly and considerately allotted to me. I do not think I could have fished from the bow, as my more accustomed companion did; besides which, I had the benefit of my host's advice and Tom King's comments. Tom is a character in his way: he loves me because I bring him 'baccy, and will fish on against all odds of wind and weather; he adores "Master George"—my companion—it was himself that taught "the young idea" how to fish; and he reveres our host as the chief of all sportsmen. 'Sit down, yer honour, or ye'll be tossed out of that entirely! Sit down, Master Gaarge, and don't mind how ye play yer fly; it's the water will do the work and cost ye nothing. Master Gaarge! Master Gaarge!!" with a yell, "he came at ye then—aisy now! back, all of ye! BACK, I say!"

No eye but that of a practised fisherman could have seen the break in that wild waste of waters, but Tom was right, and as, after about five minutes' hardest pulling, we regained the spot from whence we had drifted in about ten seconds, a subdued grunt of satisfaction told that a fish was hooked. Our host, so placid before, was all excitement. "Pull out! pull in! pull away from the rocks! easy in the bow! pull Mick! pull Tom!" then to me, "Get your line in! wind up! wind up, or you'll be entangled!" For once I did not obey with that readiness which I generally exhibit where orders are given the authority of which I recognise. *One* more cast I could not resist—I made it, and I, too, was "stuck in a fish." Then the wild excitement was at its height: the salmon rushed hither and thither, the reels sung, the lines ran out, the boat pitched and tossed more madly than before, our host shouted, the men hurra'ed and bent to their oars till they quivered again, and the spray dashed over the bows in a torrent. The fear of course was that in their reckless dance the fish, instead of harmlessly "poussetting" to each other, should perform a *chasser croiser* figure, hands across and back again, and so double the lines one on another, and inevitably escape. I confess that for a minute or more there

was not that unanimity of action or counsel which ought to prevail in great emergencies. "Let him run!" shouted the master. "Howld him hard, Master Gaarge!" screamed Tom, "give him line, yer honour! hold up your hand! drop your point! you'll lose him! pull in to the rocks! pull out of the weeds! aisy, or he'll be under the boat! holy mother! but that was a great jump! pull away now, he's under the boat!" and amid half a dozen other contradictory orders and cautions we were borne round a jutting rock, over which a friendly ash stretched its light stem and enabled my companion to obtain a secure hold on the slippery rock. Leaving him to fight it fairly out by himself, the boat's head was turned towards the middle of the lake, and it was not till we were fifty yards from the shore that, all chance of entanglement being over, I breathed freely, and calmly set my wits and sinews to work in opposition to those of the deluded salmon. It were tedious to narrate the various efforts of the fish to escape. Once hooked in open water clear of weeds and rocks, if the fish get off the man must be a muff; and in less than fifteen minutes from the time we left the shore a beautiful salmon of thirteen pounds weight, well shaped and fresh run from the sea, was gasping at the bottom of the boat. We



reached the shore just in time to gaff the other fish, and that half hour lives in my memory *albo lapide notata*.

No treatise, however lucid or comprehensive, can by any possibility, without practice, make a fisherman ; but the tyro will undoubtedly be better able to profit by the lessons which he will at first be perhaps somewhat roughly taught, if he bear in mind some hints which I am endeavouring to implant ; at any rate, he will not, or should not, be entirely taken by surprise at the manœuvres of a hooked fish if he has had patience to wade through these pages.

There is nothing more wonderful in nature than the similarity, nay, the identity, of the means adopted, under similar circumstances, by all animals to escape the danger which immediately threatens them.

“ When the hound's in the green wood,  
The deer keeps the hill ;  
When the gled's in the blue sky,  
The laverock lies still.”

When the mole disturbs the ground, the worm rushes into the light of day ; when the hedgehog is assailed, it curls itself up ; the squirrel, under like circumstances, seeks the tree ; the rabbit, its hole ; while the hare scuds across the country

trusting to show her pursuer a fair pair of heels. These are the natural modes of escape from natural enemies; but how is it that a salmon, nay, a grilse, under similar circumstances, almost invariably practises similar, and by no means simple, manœuvres to escape from what must be considered an artificial shape in which danger is presented, and of which the creature can have no experience, and those manœuvres always admirably adapted to the end in view? One of the commonest and most effective of these, especially when you are fishing with a long line, is to run in directly towards you, thereby loosening the line and gaining the opportunity of shaking the hook out of his mouth. You must, at any risk, at any sacrifice of dignity, prevent this. Run backwards, throw the point of your rod well behind you, wind up in mad haste, do anything except pulling the line through the rings with your hand, as practised in Thames fishing. This may answer with a phlegmatic barbel, or a sulky pike, but never with the astute vigorous salmon. Wind up! wind up!! wind up!!! Your reel, if made as recommended, with an extra large cylinder, will aid in this; but rapidity of motion is the great point, and unless you succeed in giving check by regaining a tight line the fish will assuredly checkmate you and be lost. A

lightly-hooked fish will invariably shake, flounder, and jump repeatedly into the air ; your effort must be, by a light, firm, unswerving pressure, to fix the hold, and in this your *pliable* rod will greatly assist ; but nerve is everything. If you are frightened—and it is no reflection on your courage to say you may be—not you but the jumping fish is lost.

Another mode, equally efficacious, must have been handed down traditionally from salmon to smolt, or how should the latter, when he arrives at salmon estate, practise it as though he had been hooked every day of his life? Rushing down stream, taking out fathoms of line too freely given, the crafty savage returns on his tracks, swimming deep down in the bed of the stream, and trusting to the weight of the water to belly out the line and leave the fisherman under the mistaken impression that the intended victim is still pursuing a downward course, the fish eventually brings such a strain upon the line that either it or the rod, or perhaps both, give way, and the finale is announced by the bright vision of *Salmo saliens* some twenty yards up stream. To prevent this, you must ever be chary of giving out line ; use your legs as well as your arms ; keep as nearly opposite to your fish as you can ; and when constrained to lend him

line, take it back with as much usury as your conscience will allow. As in every other pursuit, well begun is half done, and a fish well struck may be said to be half killed. Striking is a delicate and artistic movement, and, to be effective, must be made with some degree of variation, according to time and place. As a rule, *you can hardly strike too lightly, or too slowly.* The formula I have before enunciated—*One, he comes up! two, he goes down! three, you strike!* is invaluable. It is like Mr. Jorrocks's specific, "counting twenty" when a fox broke before he hallooed. More salmon, I venture to say, are lost by too quick striking than by any other error, and next to that by too hard striking: a short, sharp turn of the wrist is all that is required. If the hook has struck on a reasonably soft part of the mouth, the barb of the hook will be covered, and that is all that is requisite; if the point of the hook has struck upon an impenetrable bone, the harder the blow, the more likely it is to rebound innocuously.

In the autumn, when the fish run larger, and are comparatively more sluggish than in the summer, I hold striking to be entirely superfluous, nay, mischievous. Fish deep, wait till you feel a "tug," and then tighten your line. Your fish has hooked himself, and all you have to do is to kill him

—if you can. It is usual, no doubt, to lay down arbitrary rules respecting wind, water, and weather, to be conscientiously observed by fish for your especial gratification, but I have found them remarkably and unjustifiably independent on all these points. As in the case of scent, the longer a man hunts, the less he admits he knows about the rules which govern it; so, the longer he fishes, the more readily he acknowledges his ignorance of the moving causes which affect the fishes' inclinations, or, as I contend, appetites. When the water is low, bright, and clear, it is useless fishing with a fly; but I attribute this more to the impossibility of concealing yourself and disguising your operations than to any other cause. Under such circumstances, salmon are frequently taken with a great coarse lob-worm, at which a chub or a carp would turn up his nose. The most favourable state of the water for fishing is when the river is tolerably high, and neither rising nor falling rapidly, coloured, but not too deeply, and cold rather than warm. Soft winds, however essential in trout-fishing, are by no means desirable when the salmon is your object; and I think the best sport I have ever had has been with an easterly wind blowing. Still, as I have said, there is no golden rule, and your most experienced fisherman will be a better judge of the appearances

of water and weather when he returns at night than when he went out in the morning.

In a rocky stream, whether the rocks are submerged or jut out from the bank, nothing is more common than the loss of your fish from the casting-line being "cut" by the sharp edges against which it is forcibly dragged. Not unfrequently, too, the salmon will run round a rock which projects sufficiently far into the water from the opposite side to allow of his doing so, thereby getting a dead pull at the line and breaking away. In such a case, when you feel the strain on the line relax, by no means give up the game as lost. Pass over, or, better still, let your attendant pass over to the other side, quietly release the line, and it will not unfrequently happen that the fish is still firmly attached to it; he, too, has felt the relief from the strain, and is quietly resting in fancied security after what he considers a release from unaccustomed and altogether incomprehensible labour. It must not, however, be supposed that all the salmon's manœuvres are premeditated or calculated as means to an end. We are apt to refine too much, and to attribute, without due consideration, reasoning motives to actions which originate solely in an instinctive avoidance of danger. A salmon runs your line against a sharp rock by

pure accident, and not from *malice prepense*, with the express object of cutting it, although such result undoubtedly ensues. He runs round a rock because, terrified and excited, he knows not at the moment whither he is rushing, and frequently stops the moment he has gained the other side. As I have said before, his object seems to have been achieved, because from the absence of the strain he vainly assumes that it is so. In a rocky stream it is always advisable to use triple gut next to the hook, as, though one strand may be cut, the others will still hold; but, as a rule, I hold twisted gut in abomination, and invariably fish with three or four round sound links next the fly, which will be found strong enough, if properly handled, to land a shark. I have elsewhere compared the running of a fish with that of a fox, but the analogy would be more perfect if compared with that of a horse that has broken loose. A fox in a country full of small coverts, lanes, and spinneys, runs short and dodges, because he wisely expects thereby to bewilder his pursuers. A salmon in a confined rocky stream runs short and dodges about for the same reason that a horse in a confined space runs short and dodges about; he is afraid of running against or upon the opposing obstacles. Give the runaway horse a free open plain, and he stretches away at

full speed; give the salmon an extent of free open water, and he will run you out all the line you will permit, and frequently a great deal more than you ought to permit; indeed, the great secret in *killing* a salmon is to restrict him as far as possible in the article of line; hardly a manœuvre he practises, *seu ratio dederit seu sors objecerit*, but is based upon that fallacy—too much line out. Of course there are situations in which you have no alternative but to trust to the effect of unlimited concession and give unlimited rope, in the hope that the fish will hang himself. You may be standing upon an isolated, slippery rock—you may be fishing upon one side of an island when your fish perversely runs up or down the other—you may be unable to follow him through the particular arch of a bridge he affects; but all these contingencies must be endured or met as they arise. I have said somewhere, in talking of riding at a fence, that there are some fences you must ride at slowly, some you must ride at rapidly, but that there are *none* that you should ride at with a loose rein. I had almost said the same with regard to the line holding a salmon, but there is a case in which a loose, nay the loosest, line affords the best chance of killing your fish; this is when the pool in which you are fishing empties itself by a rapid, perhaps impass-



able fall or torrent. At the very brink of this, on the "torrent's smoothness ere it dash below," your fish will frequently pause, hang motionless for several seconds, uncertain whether he should bear here above "those ills he has," or seek below those "he knows not of." In the boiling water, the sharp rocks, and the headlong fall, a breakage is almost certain, and your mind is bent upon preventing it.

Now, salmon in private life doubtless differ in character and disposition ; but when in public, they invariably manifest a decided objection to being either led or driven, and if in any way they can make out what you wish them to do they *won't do it*. When the fish is poised in the situation I have described (recollect he always descends a rapid tail foremost), if you pay out your line hastily and liberally, it will be carried by the stream far behind him, and effect a very strong pull in a downward direction. The fish takes the hint and rushes upwards, exactly as you desired, and if you give him an opportunity of retrieving his error it is your own fault. Should your manœuvre fail, and he persist in his original intention, the free line is all in your favour, as he never gets that dead pull which, in the heavy, rapid water, must of necessity be fatal.

Of the books treating on the salmon, Mr.

Pennell's volume in the Badminton Library is at once the most exhaustive, and, as far as the art and mystery of fishing goes, the most instructive that has ever come under my notice. The illustrations and diagrams are wonderfully accurate, and if fishing could be taught by precept, illustration, or diagram, the tiro could not do better than devote his time to the study of it. I differ, however, in many essential points from his sketch of the natural history of the fish, and I venture to bring them under notice in a brief sketch of its history and habits. Should my readers desire a more detailed account, I would refer them to "The Autobiography of *Salmo Salar*," edited by me some years since, and which Frank Buckland, at a public dinner, declared to be "*the* best book on the subject that ever was written." It now forms a portion of "Flood, Field, and Forest," published by Messrs. Virtue, Limited.

#### SHORT NOTES ON THE NATURAL HISTORY AND HABITS OF THE SALMON.

THE salmon spawns during the early winter months. The young fish are hatched in from a hundred to a hundred and twenty days. Running water is absolutely necessary to the vivification of

the ova. The fry in its early stage is barred, as, without exception, are all the salmonidæ. It is then called a parr; I think improperly. The true parr (*Salmo salmulus* of Linnæus, Yarrell, and many other authors) differs materially from the salmon parr, but they are sufficiently like for confusion, and much confusion and much bitter discussion have ensued from the two being called by the same name. In the spring of the following year the early hatched fish assume a suit of silvery scales, and with the first May floods visit the sea.\* They are then called smolts. The later hatched ones are said to remain in the fresh water until the May following, but I greatly doubt it. The second spring, I have little doubt, sees the greedy young smolt, in company with myriads of his brethren, descending the stream on their way to the sea, wherein they remain until the late summer or early autumn. On their return they are called "grilse," in Ireland "peel," and run from three to five or six pounds in weight. The male salmon is called a "kipper," the female a "baggit," After spawning *both* are called "kelts." For some time subsequently they are poor and out of condition, and terribly voracious. They may be taken in any

\* "The first floods in May,  
Carry the smolts away."

numbers by any kind of lure, but are indifferent food though not unwholesome, and until recruited, "well mended" as it is called, show little sport. In Tweed, however, and rivers where food is abundant, they apparently recover their condition, and for a short time before returning to the sea, which they continue to do until the middle or end of May, they are as strong and vigorous, and show as much sport, as a fresh-run fish, frequently more. The kelts are protected by law, as are the smolts, but oddly enough the baggits, though on the eve of spawning, may be killed with impunity.

Next to poachers, who destroy the fish on the spawning-beds, and the bad sportsmen, who kill the female on their way thither, the worst enemies the salmon has to contend with are of its own race. The old kippers not only drive the young ones away, but fight among themselves to the death, and hundreds float down the stream dead from the spawning-beds every year. The baggits, too, have a clumsy knack of selecting their beds where others have been before them, and a very large proportion of the early-sown seed is destroyed by being routed up to make room for the later and less valuable deposit. The larvæ of dragon-flies and other insects infest the spawning-beds, and destroy vast quantities of eggs. I am not

aware of any other serious danger to the egg than the above. It is true that both the common and bull-trout devour them with avidity, and wait in large numbers immediately below the spawning-beds for that purpose, but they can only operate upon the light, unfecundated eggs which float down, or such as have not been covered by the gravel, or those which, after having been deposited, are routed up again as before-mentioned, and none of which could, by possibility, ever be hatched. The greatest benefit that can be bestowed on a river is the establishment of hatching-pools, to which the ova may be removed, and out of which the young are allowed to escape so soon as they have absorbed the little sack of nutriment provided by nature for their sustenance while in the baby state. It is waste of time and money to keep them longer. Frost does not affect the spawn prejudicially.

The amended legislation which, in my humble opinion, is required to ensure the enormous increase of this invaluable fish would provide for the shortening of the annual close-time for rods, and the lengthening of the weekly close-time for nets—twelve hours extra for the latter would make an immense difference, and the closing of the netting-season should vary according as the rivers are late or early ones. (The fishery inspectors, however,

have so admirably argued this point that I need not insist upon it.) Rod-fishing, either for trout or salmon, should be absolutely prohibited from the end of October to the 1st of March; no gaff should be used after the 1st of September at latest, and the barbed gaff should be absolutely prohibited. Enlarged powers of entry on lands and searching suspicious persons should be given to water-bailiffs and keepers; and if fine and imprisonment were awarded to the *purchaser* as well as to the vendor of fish killed out of season—to the receiver as well as to the thief—we should soon see our rivers, the impurities and obstacles being removed, as well stocked with fish as in the days when the mythical apprentice objected to having salmon more than three times a week. No salmon should be allowed to be sold from 1st November to 1st March. No doubt there are still plenty of kelts in the river; but why should they be spared? they are perfectly wholesome and by no means bad food. They are, too, for the time, barren fish.

When I say that the kelt is not unwholesome I am aware that I am at variance with the writer of the volume in the Badminton Library. Mr. Pennell describes the kelt as “unfit for food, *almost poisonous!*” I fancy that he did not live in the days before the Act for their preservation was

passed. The most acceptable present you could make in those days to the fisherman, the farmer, or the labourer was a well-mended kelt. Why, now hundreds are eaten every spring—even in London—paid for at the rate of 3s. 6d. to 4s. a pound, and appreciated at their cost. I have met with them at “good men’s tables.” It is true that the flesh is soft and pale, instead of firm and red, and the flavour very inferior to that of a spring fish; but to talk of it as “unwholesome” or “almost poisonous” is simply nonsense. As well say that the flesh of a cow six weeks after calving is “almost poisonous;” or, to quote a more apposite example, a trout three months after spawning. As, however, the author on a previous page states that “after spawning males are called kippers, females baggits,” it would seem that his experience in kelts has been limited. *Male or female*, the fish, after spawning, are known as “kelts.” The process of spawning is this:—the fish collect in a large still pool, having a rapid, shallow, gravelly stream immediately above it, to which they ascend in pairs. In the gravelly bed of this stream the female fish forms a trough by wriggling her body sideways on its bed. She is attended by a kipper, who circulates round the “redd,” driving off intruders, and from time to

time visiting his mate, and impregnating the ova, which she emits at intervals, with his milt. The immediate result of the fertilisation of the eggs thus effected is that their specific gravity is greatly increased ; they sink, and are at once covered by a similar motion to that with which the female dug the trough. This process is continued at intervals, the fish meanwhile to recruit their strength sinking back into the pool, from which, from time to time, they return to repeat the process. It is said, on authority I must not impugn, that the milt of the male parr will fecundate the salmon's eggs ; when artificially effected it is not improbable ; but I greatly doubt whether, in a state of nature, anything of the sort ever occurs. Mr. Pennell, however, says that, should the male fish be killed, and no other available, the female, in default of a better mate, seeks a male parr, and brings him on to the spawning bed. I confess I should as soon expect a hen-turkey, in the absence of the gobbler, to pair off with a bantam cock.

A very exaggerated estimate appears in the same volume of the height to which a salmon jumps. This the author puts at "from ten to twelve feet ;" that is twice the height of a man. It is difficult, standing on the bank, to judge of the exact height of a salmon's jump, the flat surface of



the water being, perhaps, nearly level with the observer's eye, there is nothing to compare with; but did anyone ever see a fish jump even as high as his own head, let alone four or five feet above it? I think not! I should say that from three to four feet is the utmost extent to which the fish, swimming rapidly upwards to the surface, can project itself into the air.\*

The rapidity of the fish's movements, again, is much exaggerated in the same chapter. "It is calculated," says the author, "that when swimming at full speed the salmon darts through the water at the rate of 1500 feet a minute, or upwards of 400 miles a day," which, as he remarks, "*if kept up*, would speedily take the fish *round the globe*." No doubt it would, but has this velocity ever been tested? Of course, the author does not mean that the fish habitually swims at that rate, but the statement implies an extreme velocity in its ordinary movements. Now, what is the case? I shall surprise my readers when I say that the average pace at which the salmon travels, on leaving the sea, is just *one mile an hour*. I, long ago, from observation made this calculation, and I lately had it confirmed by a highly competent witness—

\* The jump, so called, excepting mere surface jumps, is only a prolonged swim.

Mr. Macdonald, now head-keeper at Ellon Castle, who has spent his life among game and fish, a good naturalist and a keen and most accurate observer. He told me that when his father and himself had a netting water on the Dee, seventeen miles from the sea, they could calculate almost to a minute the time it would take the fish to come within the scope of their nets. That time was seventeen hours within a few *minutes*, calculated from mid-tide, at which time the fish take their departure, and their arrival could be reckoned on with absolute certainty; first came the white trout, then the grilse, and then the salmon, but all within a very short time of each other. This was at mid-season; the early fish might swim somewhat faster, the autumn fish somewhat slower; but one mile an hour is the average pace at which the fish swims.

The "kipper" shortly before spawning presents as hideous an appearance as can well be imagined. His general colour is a blotchy red, spotted and streaked with darker shades. His mouth is furnished on the lower jaw with a sort of beak, thick as one's middle finger, and nearly as long; this fits into a socket, dug out in the upper jaw for its reception, into which it exactly fits. On regarding this singular apparatus it would seem impossible for the fish to open his mouth, but the

salmon has a wide gape, and as its antagonists find out can open it to some purpose, the mouth being furnished at that period with numerous sharp teeth as a cat's, with which he inflicts serious wounds on his frequent antagonists. This beak is regarded by many authors, as well as by Mr. Pennell, as a weapon of offence, but I venture to differ from this view. The beak would be of no use for the purpose, it is cartilaginous, and by no means hard. I consider it, on the contrary, a provision of nature to prevent the savage brutes from tearing one another to pieces, a purpose it admirably fulfils. Other writers suggest its use to be the digging-out of the "redds" in which the females deposit their eggs. It would in fact be utterly useless for such a purpose, it would be worn out in ten minutes—in fact, as I have said, the female alone forms her own "redds," and alone covers her own eggs.

The colour of the male, as I said, before spawning is simply hideous, that of the female until a short time previously, does not alter. When ripe for spawning she becomes dark in colour. Mr. Pennell derives the name of "Black Fishers" from the fact of their killing the salmon at this period, but I have always understood that the marauders were so called, from their blackening their faces when they went on their illicit occupa-

tion. Almost immediately after spawning, she rapidly resumes her natural colour, as does the male, and in a short time both male and female, the former having absorbed his beak, assume the appearance, though modified, of the clean fish; in fact, there are few handsomer fish than the well-mended kelt, though it is not often that they are mistaken by the experienced eye. The colour of the back is bluish instead of black, the head is somewhat disproportionately large, and the vent is greatly extended. Still, I have seen kelts taken in April which have occasioned much discussion as to whether they were not in reality clean fish. Perhaps in such cases "the wish was father to the thought." That mistakes, however, do occur, even with those who ought to be well acquainted with the difference, is well known. Without referring to those kelts which, as I have mentioned, are sold in London, there are thousands disposed of in the neighbourhood of the rivers, some purchased innocently, and some with a full knowledge of what the fish really is. The water-bailiffs are frequently profoundly ignorant of the difference between the two. I remember killing a splendid kelt in Tweed, when I rented the Merton water. It was in a pool called "the Pot;" I had given the fish to a shepherd who had been greatly interested in his capture.

As well pleased he went up the bank, he ran against two water-bailiffs. A Highlandman is as likely to drop his fingers or his toes as to lose his presence of mind. The man was equal to the occasion. He at once accosted them with, "Aye, lads, here's a gran' clean fish Mr. Rooper has just sent me up to the Inn with." The bailiffs looked at the fish, admired it, and passed on. A gillie named Swan, I once employed, told me that in the spring he had a share in a water, near Coldstream, and that one morning early they had landed a dozen fish, eight of which were kelts. The bailiffs came up, and at once fixed upon the four *clean* fish, declaring their belief that *they* were kelts. Swan admitted the doubt, and walked off with the eight kelts, which were forthwith transmitted to London. The four being submitted to the proper authorities were passed as "clean fish," as undoubtedly they were, and they followed the unclean ones by the next train.

After spawning the fish die in great numbers from exhaustion, the mortality amongst the males being far greater than that among the females. In passing down to the sea they commit sad havoc amongst the smolts, far worse than do the pike, which only "take toll," as it were, of the passing crowd, but the kelts accompany them, and devour

them by hundreds as they pass along. The fish die not only from exhaustion, but in great numbers from the effect of the disease, which more or less affects them every year. The effect is loathsome to a degree; the fish affected by it becomes gradually encrusted with a sort of mouldy fungus, beginning on the gills and the tail, and gradually spreading over the whole surface of the body and eating into it. When attacked they present a pitiable and most disagreeable appearance; swimming uneasily about at the surface of the water, seeking some retired and still nook in which they may give up the ghost. In this state they are taken out of the water by poachers in hundreds, and after being scraped sold by them at a penny or twopence a pound in the neighbouring towns. I need hardly say that, however disgusting in appearance, the food even then is by no means unwholesome, far less poisonous. The bailiffs are instructed to take out the dead and dying fish from the water—a mistake in my opinion. While there is life there is hope, and if a flood comes it is wonderful how many of these dying fish will float down with it, and, once reaching the sea, if not devoured by the seals and porpoises, recuperate and become in a few days strong and healthy fish; so great is *Vis naturæ medicatrix*.

As for the dead fish, they are better left

in the water than poisoning the banks. The flood sweeps them clean away into the sea, where they are devoured by the gulls or other of nature's scavengers.

I trust I may not have wearied my readers by this disquisition, and that I may be pardoned for expressing so plainly my own views, the result of long and patient observations, although in opposition to those of better known authors. I would only ask that mine may be tested by inquiries of fishermen and those *practically* acquainted with the subject.

THE END.







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